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- Voltaire

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COVER:
Top - Protest by Free Media Movement in Colombo against Sivaram killing; Bottom: Protest by Jathika Hela Urumaya in Colombo against Joint Mechanism with Tigers

A heinous crime

Dharmaratnam Sivaram, better known by his nom de plume 'Taraki', has been one of the most informed and well known journalists in Sri Lanka and recognised as an expert commentator on the ethnic conflict, especially on matters relating to security and military related issues, tactics and strategies of the warring parties. His brutal murder within a few hours of his abduction on 28 April has shocked and saddened the journalistic community and unnerved the political establishment.

It will be wrong to describe this heinous and cowardly murder as a senseless and mindless act. It was premeditated, deliberate and cold-blooded. The perpetrators were fully conscious as to why they were committing it. Abducted from the highway, forcibly bundled into a vehicle, gagged and driven to a lonely spot where he was shot at point-blank range with a 9mm pistol. It was a targeted politically motivated assassination to silence Taraki forever and intimidate others like him into silence.

The outpouring of condemnations, tributes and eulogies that followed his assassination, both from within the country and outside, not only reflect the considerable stature that he enjoyed as a journalist, but also demonstrate the esteem and admiration in which Sivaram was held by the countless number of his colleagues and friends, even though most of them had views divergent from those of Sivaram.

During his relatively short career as a journalist, Sivaram had gained a reputation and name for himself as an outspoken and knowledgeable commentator and analyst sought after by many an international Sri Lanka watcher. Incidentally, in the mid 1990s, Sivaram regularly wrote a column to this journal on a monthly basis.

During a phase when Sinhala and Tamil nationalisms were in a state of continuing armed confrontation, and in the highly polarised and ethnicised world of Sri Lankan politics, the writings of most journalists and commentators, with very rare exceptions, reflected either a Sinhala or a Tamil nationalist perspective. And there is no doubt that Sivaram's contributions reflected a Tamil nationalist perspective. That he had such a perspective was not surprising given the fact that Sivaram in an earlier period had played a leading political and military role in Tamil militant politics before he took up journalism as his main preoccupation.

Hailing from Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, Sivaram with his family chose to live in the south of the island from where he wrote freely and fearlessly to newspapers whose editorial positions on the ethnic issue were quite contrary to those articulated by Sivaram in his regular weekly columns. That he was able to do so stood to the credit of the relative freedom, tolerance and the democratic space that continued to prevail in the south of the island where he had the opportunity and capacity to count as his best friends and mates a large number of journalists who belonged to the Sinhalese community.

As to who carried out this dastardly murder remains a mystery. Many suspect that it was carried out by the Karuna faction for the reason that Sivaram's recent writings tended to be in support of the mainstream LTTE and critical of the erstwhile eastern commander of the LTTE, Colonel Karuna, who defected in April last year. Since that split, the fratricidal bloodletting mainly in the east of the island, occasionally spilling over into other parts of the island, has been unrelenting. The Sri Lanka monitoring Mission (SLMM) has documented over a thousand abductions in the Northeast alone since the ceasefire between the Government and the LTTE was signed. Many hundreds, most of them unarmed, have been killed. This brutal and merciless campaign of politically motivated killings and counter-killings continue unabated. And Sivaram has become the most prominent latest victim leaving behind a grieving widow and three orphans. His killing represents not only an assault on the right to freedom of expression. It is also a cruel denial of the right to life itself.

The prolonged violent conflict has spawned within the Tamil community a culture of widespread intolerance leading to a denial of the right to freedom of expression and political dissent even in its mildest form. What started as a struggle for liberation has devoured some the best and able leaders and sons of the Tamil community. Many an able and willing Tamil has been denied the opportunity to make their contribution to the community and society at large; they have been physically eliminated or forced to flee and remain abroad. The Tamil community today stands physically debilitated and intellectually impoverished. And Sivaram, like many others before him, has joined the ranks of those many that have paid the ultimate price with their lives.

NEWS REVIEW

● Donors pledge $3 billion aid to Sri Lanka

May 17 - International donors wrapped up a key conference for Sri Lanka pledging $3bn in aid, but stressing the importance of progress in resolving the island's protracted ethnic conflict to pave the way for its disbursement, according to news reports from Colombo. Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga had promised donors that she would overcome opposition from the JVP to negotiate and conclude a joint mechanism with the LTTE, to deal with post-tsunami reconstruction.

According to western diplomats in Colombo, the increased foreign aid offer of three billion dollars for Sri Lanka's tsunami recovery was mainly aimed at pushing Colombo and Tamil Tigers to work together to salvage their long-satlled peace talks.

"The message from the donors is very loud and clear: money is not a problem, but get the peace process back on track," a Western diplomat said. "We also want to see how the government will spend the money."

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Sarath Amunugama said there were no conditions set by the donors, who raised their tsunami aid pledges to more than three billion dollars, but that the government was also aware of the need for peace.

"Unless we go on the path of negotiations, many of these pledges and funding will not materialise," Amunugama told reporters shortly after the meeting.

The Sri Lankan Development Forum (SLDF), attended by a large number of international donor countries and agencies held a two-day conference commencing 16 May in central hill country town of Kandy primarily to discuss post-tsunami and post-conflict assistance for Sri Lanka.

This is the first time this key donor forum met in Sri Lanka. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Japan Bank For International Cooperation and other funding agencies and around 200 delegates from international donor agencies participated at the sessions.

Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga inaugurated the Forum at the Earl's Regency Hotel. Finance and Planning Minister Sarath Amunugama made the welcome address. The World Bank's vice president, Mr. Praful Patel, delivered an address on behalf of the development partners.

After the ceremonial inaugural event the second part of the SLDF began in Mahaweli Reach Hotel, Katugastota.

The first two sessions of the conference discussed post-tsunami related matters. Among others, Sri Lanka's Ministry of Finance and External resources Department Director General Sujatha Cooray, representatives from Task Force for rebuilding (TAFREN) and Government Agents (GA) in Matara, Trincomalee and Mullaitivu addressed the Forum.

In a direct reference to the opposition she was facing, particularly from the JVP, the Presdident told the gathering, "A vociferous minority," could not be allowed to "hinder the forward march of a nation towards economic peace and prosperity. ... Governments have been elected by the people to take decisions, sometimes difficult decisions, sometimes dangerous ones." Kumaratunga told donors, "On this issue we are fully aware that the lives of some of us are in extreme danger," adding her commitment to creating a joint mechanism with the LTTE.

Mr. Praful Patel, the World Bank's vice president for South Asia, had said that donors were keen that Sri Lanka's faltering peace process be revived. "For many development partners, the peace process is at the core of their interest in Sri Lanka," Patel said, adding international lenders were also backing the initiative as it was the only way to ensure economic development.

"We feel a joint mechanism will make it quicker to deliver aid and also make it easier for donors to give more," the Dutch ambassador to Sri Lanka, Susan Blankheart, was reported as saying.

She said European Union countries backed moves to swiftly establish a proposed "joint mechanism" that President Chandrika Kumaratunga promised after saying she would do it even at the risk of her life from Sinhala extremists vehemently opposed to the setting up a joint mechanism with the Tigers.

Following the conclusion of the two-day sessions, Sri Lanka's Treasury Secretary, P. B. Jeyasundara, said the pledges included $745 millions in bilateral assistance, $631 millions by multilateral agencies and $853 millions by NGOs.

A further $300 million is likely to accrue in the form of debt-relief, Mr. Jeyasundara said, lauding India, which recently announced a three-year debt moratorium as the "first country" to provide debt relief. The challenge now, Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Nirupama Rao said, was to transform pledges into projects "equitably and on the basis of objective needs assessment."

The Sri Lankan government has estimated it will cost around $1.5 billion to $1.6 billion to rebuild towns, schools and other infrastructure destroyed by December's tsunami, a Reuters report said, adding it was not immediately clear what any excess aid would be used for.

A separate 4.5-billion-dollar pledge by donors in June 2003 to help rebuild Sri Lanka's conflict areas was directly linked to progress in the Norwegian peace process and remains largely on hold amid the talks stalled in April 2003.

Diplomats said that Sri Lanka's tsunami recovery money could face the same fate as the pledges for the peace process unless the government can overcome political difficulties and press ahead with reconstruction work.

The Dutch ambassador to Sri Lanka, Susan Blankheart, said the lenders were not making aid conditional on the peace process, but that it was essential to ensure a more equitable distribution of relief. "We feel a joint mechanism (between the government and the Tigers) will make it quicker to deliver aid and also make it easier for donors to give more," Blankheart said.

A Buddhist monk parliamentarian belonging to the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) sought to steal the thunder at the conference when, immediately after President Kumaratunga finished her inaugural speech, he interrupted proceedings to make an unscheduled statement slamming the LTTE and the proposed joint mechanism.

Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera told startled delegates that a joint mechanism would "give legitimacy to one of the most ruthless terrorist organizations in the world, thereby undermining the global struggle against terrorism."

"No country or organization that has any regard for democracy and the upholding of human rights would under these circumstances recommend such a mechanism with an organization of this nature," he said. "We are certain, for example, that none of you would argue that a joint mechanism of this nature should be established."

The President had used the occasion of the Forum to openly criticise her coalition partner, the JVP which has vowed to oppose any joint mechanism with the Tamil Tigers. Later the JVP in a statement slammed Kumaratunga for discussing differences within the coalition in public. "We condemn the president's articulation of such differences in front of the international community," the JVP said, adding that they expected Sri Lankan leaders to follow internationally accepted norms and decorum. "Our party could

have replied to what she said, but since ours is a party which acts in accordance with accepted international norms and also we didn't want to ridicule our motherland in the presence of foreign delegates by slinging mud at each other as a responsible political party we refrained from doing so at this forum," the JVP further said.

● LTTE rejects President's claim

May 18 - Accepting a joint mechanism did not mean that the LTTE was accepting the sovereignty of the government, LTTE political chief S. P. Thamil Chelvan told a regional newspaper published in Jaffna. He also said that the LTTE was angered by the irresponsible comments of the President that the LTTE had accepted the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. The LTTE would not work under any authority direct or otherwise and would not accept the sovereignty of the government, he said.

"We have categorically said so during the initial stages of the discussions on the joint mechanism. We said we cannot work under the Presidential Secretariat, Prime Minister's office or Parliament. We only agreed to work in an independent body consisting of foreign monitors and observers.

"We reject outright the President's comments that we are willing to accept Sri Lanka as a sovereign state" he had said. "Just because we agreed to a joint mechanism, the President is attempting to publicize locally and internationally that we have accepted the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. It is misleading and irresponsible of her to do so as we looked forward to a joint mechanism to meet urgent humanitarian needs and provide relief to our people, that is why we were willing to compromise on our previous stand," he said.

"We also made it very clear that funds should be channelled directly through international custodians who will monitor the process and not through the government."

"It is amusing and disappointing to find that the head of state the President having expressed statements contrary to what we agreed to initially. Further more by stating that she would take a decision on the joint mechanism in a few weeks time, the President has angered and disappointed us even more as we believed that the President would make a decisive announcement on the joint mechanism at the Economic Forum in Kandy. But by her dilly dallying it only proves that she is only allowing for a hardening of opposition from sections including the JVP in the south to the joint mechanism and in reality was only a strategy of the President to refrain from forming joint mechanism to the LTTE," Tamilchelvan said.

● Balasingham urges action on aid

May 18 - Norwegian diplomats met with LTTE's Chief Negotiator and political advisor, Mr. Anton Balasingham, to discuss current developments in Oslo's peace initiative in Sri Lanka. Mr. Balasingham had welcomed the donor community's commitment to a joint mechanism between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE for aid distribution, but called for an agreement to be finalised and signed, they said.

Norwegian Special Envoy Mr. Erik Solheim and Foreign Ministry official, Ms. Lisa Golden, met with Mr. Balasingham at his residence in London for two hours of disaussions.

Noting President Chandrika Kumaratunga's assurance to donors that she would overcome opposition within her government to the joint mechanism and strike a deal with the Tigers, Mr. Balasingham had called for concrete action. After two decades of war and in the wake of the Boxing Day tsunami, the Tamil people desperately needed the international donors' assistance, Mr. Balasingham had said.

"President Kumaratunga must engage seriously with the LTTE in finalising the terms of the joint mechanism and sign the agreement to enable aid to flow to the Northeast," Mr. Balasingham was quoted as saying.

Mr. Solheim said he would convey the LTTE's view to the Sri Lankan government. Noting the recent spate of violent incidents in Sri Lanka, the Special Envoy had stressed the importance of both sides remaining committed to the February 2002 ceasefire agreement. Mr. Solheim, who recently travelled to Delhi to discuss developments in the Norwegian peace initiative with the Indian government, briefed Mr. Balasingham on his visit, sources said, but declined to reveal further details.

● JVP proposes 'national committee'

May 19 – The JVP which opposes the setting up of a joint mechanism between the Government and the LTTE for post-tsunami assistance has instead proposed a 'national committee' headed by the island's President.

In a statement issued following a meeting of its politburo, the JVP strongly and totally rejected the joint mechanism to be set up between the Government and the LTTE, charging that it would be unconstitutional, undemocratic and create chaos not only in the country but in the whole South Asian region.

Instead the JVP proposed a widely representative national committee headed by the President to oversee tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction along with district boards.

"Any mechanism should not create or worsen the inequalities in the country. More importantly it should not lead the South Asian region towards insecurity and instability. Though the official joint mechanism proposal has not been publicised yet, it is clear this proposed joint mechanism with the LTTE will violate all these concepts," the JVP said in a statement.

The statement added that accepted democratic norms would be violated as soon as a democratic government entered into a joint mechanism with a terrorist group which bore arms and had no public mandate. "Moreover, sharing the sole authority given to the government through the Constitution, with a terrorist organisation which attempts to divide the motherland and which does not show any sign of entering into the democratic mainstream, in order to rebuild a part of the country, is indeed a violation of the Constitution," the JVP statement said..

It maintained that if the government entered into a joint mechanism with a terrorist group which threatened the security of the South Asian region, it would create chaos in the region. "It will also affect diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and other countries in the region. In this context the President and the government should take tangible and special steps to provide relief and rebuild tsunami affected people and areas without going for a joint mechanism," the JVP said.

● TNA demands international probe into Sivaram murder

May 5 - Mr.R.Sampanthan, parliamentary group leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has demanded that the government should take steps to constitute an international commission of inquiry comprising of impartial and qualified persons from the countries in the SAARC region, like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and from the Commonwealth countries like Australia, New Zealand and canto to investigate all aspects of the murder of journalist Mr.D.Sivaram.

Mr.Sampanthan opened the special debate on the murder of Mr.D.Sivaram by moving an adjournment motion in the parliament on Friday, 5 May.

The adjournment motion which condemned the killing of Sivaram said the crime was also a threat top free and fearless journalism in this country, and that was imperative that it should be fully and properly investigated and the truth ascertained. Condemnation by government personalities and statements that proper

investigations would be conducted provide no guarantee whatsoever that justice would be done, and

"therefore ask the Government to take steps to constitute an international commission of inquiry comprising of independent impartial and qualified persons to investigate all aspects of the crime and submit its finding. We call upon all right thinking people in the country to support the call for the constitution of an independent impartial international commission of inquiry."

"Sivaram's stature as a journalist and the manner of his killing makes it imperative that the Sri Lankan State should leave no stone unturned in ascertaining the truth. I am sorry to state that the steps thus for taken do not inspire confidence. Sivaram has left behind a young widow and three teen-aged children who are entitled to justice. It would be grave mistake by the Sri Lankan State to deny justice to that young family. The Sri Lankan State owes a duty to Sri Lankan society to ensure that the culprits are brought before the law. I am sorry to state that the action that the Sri Lankan State has taken thus far do not event inspire the impression that the Sri Lankan State is attempting to do so.

"There is a need for the persons responsible for the maintenance of law and order in this country to answer before an independent, impartial Commission of Inquiry for Sivaram's death and all the circumstances relating thereto. The Government should not fail in its duty," Mr Sampanthan said.

● RSF urges SLMM probe murder

May 10 - Reporters San Frontiers (RSF) have urged the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) supervising Sri Lanka's ceasefire to carry out their own investigations into the abduction and murder two weeks ago of political columnist and military analyst Dharmeratnam Sivaram.

"Experience leads us to fear that the Colombo authorities will not do everything necessary to identify the killers and the instigators of Sivaram's murder. In fact, the absence of any rigorous investigations and trials in previous murders and attacks on journalists has considerably discredited the state's work in support of press freedom," the worldwide press freedom organisation wrote.

"The killers and those who sent them to kill journalists Myilvaganam Nimalarajan, Aiyathurai Nadesan, Rohana Kumara, Nadarajah Atputharajah and Anthony Mariyanayagam over the past four years, have never been brought to trial. Reporters Without Borders has constantly condemned this climate of impunity."

"The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has for too long ignored political murders and violations of press freedom. Peace is not built just by a halt in fighting, but also through the opportunity for civil society, including journalists, to work freely and safely. Peace also comes through justice."

Reporters Without Borders said it has previously - in July 2004 - called on the SLMM to directly intervene in cases of press freedom violations.

"We regret that the Norwegian authorities have never publicly condemned attacks against journalists by one of the two parties in conflict, while the document setting up the SLMM specifies that every violation should be the subject of an investigation."

● Tiger leader confers 'Maamanithar' title on Sivaram

April 30 - "Death never destroys great men who had lived for lofty ideals," said V Pirapaharan in a message released from Vanni on 30 April, Saturday, conferring the 'Maamanithar' (Great Man) award on journalist Dharmeratnam Sivaram. Mr Sivaram, a senior editorial board member of TamilNet, was abducted and murdered by unidentified persons Thursday evening 10.30pm.

Full text of the message issued by Liberation Tigers conferring "Maamaniathar" award to Sivaram follows:

"Tamil people have lost today a highly principled man who deeply loved them and the Tamil Nation. A voice that echoed the freedom of the Tamil people and their homeland, Tamil Eelam had been silenced today. An eminent Tamil journalist had fallen victim to the enemy's act of cowardice.

Humble and honest, Mr.Dharmaratnam Sivaram is a unique person. He is knowledgeable and is an expert in the field of journalism. As an internationally renowned journalist, Sivaram does not need any introduction.

"Through his writings, he brought out the Tamil National question in the international arena with clarity and cohesion. Diligently and cleverly, he exposed to the international and diplomatic community, the false propaganda undertaken by the Sinhala regime. Positioning him in the Sinhala stronghold, Sivaram forthrightly told the outer world the injustices and the atrocities perpetrated by the Sinhala ruling elite on the Tamil Nation. Although facing danger and threats, Sivaram fought against injustice fearlessly with courage. Above all, he relentlessly worked to keep the Tamil people politically vigilant. The yeoman service rendered by him is eternally praiseworthy.

"Respecting his love of the Nation and his love for freedom, I am proud to confer posthumously on Mr.Dharmaratnam Sivaram, the noble National Award of "Great Man". Death never destroys great men who have lived for lofty ideals. They have an everlasting place in the history of our Nation."

● CPJ alarmed at death threats to journalists

May 13 – "We are alarmed by the rising threats against our colleagues, and call on authorities to find those responsible for these crimes. All sides of this conflict must respect the rights of journalists and help safeguard the free flow of information in Sri Lanka," Executive Director of Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Ann Cooper said in a news alert issued at CPJ's website on 12 May..

"Two journalists with the Sri Lankan press freedom organization Free Media Movement (FMM) received death threats on Tuesday (10) at the group's headquarters in the capital, Colombo. Several other journalists also said they are under threat in the wake of the abduction and murder of veteran Tamil journalist Dharmeratnam Sivaram late last month.

"Victor Ivan, editor of the Sinhala-language tabloid Ravaya and FMM organizer, and Sunanda Deshaprita, FMM spokesman and freelance journalist, received letters from an alleged Sinhalese extremist group calling itself "Theraputtabhaya force. The letters, signed by a person identified only as Commander Mayadunne, threatened all 'traitors' and said they should be ready to become 'fertilizer of the motherland.'

"The group also claimed responsibility for the April 28 murder of Sivaram, who was a founding member of the TamilNet news Web site and a columnist for the English language Daily Mirror who wrote sympathetically about the rebel group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"Local sources say that the FMM may be a target for extremist groups because it condemned Sivaram's murder and has supported calls for a negotiated peace to end Sri Lanka's longstanding civil war.

"Several journalists have reported being under threat. Lasantha Wickrematunga, editor of the English-language paper The Sunday Leader, sent a letter to Sri Lanka's police chief last week requesting police protection after a government official publicly accused him of being a 'terrorist', The Associated Press reported. Other local journalists told CPJ that they fear being targeted in retaliation for Sivaram's killing because they have written critically about the

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LTTE or are perceived as sympathetic to the government.

"With peace talks between the LTTE and the government stalled and millions of dollars of tsunami aid money frozen pending an agreement between the two sides about distribution rights, political vitriol and violence are on the rise, sources told CPJ. Since the LTTE split into two warring factions last year, tensions between the rival Tamil groups have escalated and journalists have become increasingly vulnerable to attack.

"We are alarmed by the rising threats against our colleagues, and call on authorities to find those responsible for these crimes. All sides of this conflict must respect the rights of journalists and help safeguard the free flow of information in Sri Lanka," CPJ Executive Director Ann Cooper said.

● 'North-East is very close to India's heart'

April 30 – "India is committed to assisting in the development of Sri Lanka's NorthEast through economic and technical assistance. The welfare and well-being of the people living in the NorthEast is very close to India's heart," Mr.Shyam Saran, Indian Foreign Secretary said in Trincomalee handing over a consignment of materials worth about five million rupees donated by the Government of India to the Government Technical College located in Mihindupura, a suburb of the east port town.

Indian Foreign Secretary arrived in Colombo on a four-day visit Friday, 30 April.

Mr.Shyam Saran accompanied by his Joint Secretary Ms Neelan Deo and Indian High Commissioner in Colombo Ms Nirupama Rao were received at the entrance to the college by Mr.V. Suntheralingam, Principal and his staff. They were then taken in a procession to the venue with the band music of Sri Shanmuga Hindu Girls College in attendance. Mr.Gamini Rodrigo, Trincomalee Government Agent also was present.

Mr.Suntheralingam presided the event attended by two Trincomalee district parliamentarians, Mr.R.Sampanthan, Mr.K.Thurairatnasingham and Mr .R.Thiakalingam, Secretary to the North East Provincial Education Ministry and college staff.

Mr.Suntheralingam made the welcome speech. Excerpts from the speech made by Mr.Shyam Saran follows: -

"I am delighted to be in the fabled harbour city of Trincomalee which is renowned in legend and history and known by a variety of names including Kona Malai and Tiru Kona Malai. The Thirukoneswaram Temple of Trincomalee is revered throughout South India. Thirugnanasampanthar, the Saivaite Saint of the AD 7th century, featured the temple in his devotional hymns. And as far as the natural beauty of Trincomalee is concerned, it has been aptly said nature has endowed the region with a beauty and grace that has not been excelled by man.

"The importance of Trincomalee as a place of strategic interest has also guided its destiny over the last 500 years. Therefore, to be in Trincomalee is a most interesting and educative experience.

"India is committed to assisting in the development of Sri Lanka's NorthEast through economic and technical assistance. The presence of the Lanka-IOC Corporation in Trincomalee and assistance to projects such as the one involving Trincomalee technical College are symbolic and representative of the close and enduring ties that we have with the NorthEast of Sri Lanka. Trincomalee has also provided an important setting for the close interaction between the navies of our two countries. I was particularly glad to have had the opportunity during my visit here today to meet with officers of the Eastern Naval Area; many of them have very pleasant memories of the periods they spent on training

in India.

"Our ties with your city were further cemented in the aftermath of the tragic tsunami. The Government and the people of India reached out spontaneously to help Sri Lanka after the tsunami. Our disaster relief teams worked tirelessly with the Sri Lankans including here in Trincomalee, to restore normalcy. In the NorthEast, our Navy and Army teams helped to restore communications, administer medical relief, provide drinking water, restore functioning of hospitals and helped to rebuild the damaged bridge at Arugam Bay.

"Furthermore, we wish to make a lasting contribution to post-tsunami reconstruction. We are finalising our plans in this regard in close consultation with the Government of Sri Lanka. The Government of India is providing a sum of US $ 23 million for tsunami rehabilitation projects in this country. Our intention is to execute projects that will provide maximum benefit and relief to the tsunami hit areas.

"The welfare and well-being of the people living in the NorthEast is very close to India's heart. There are many ties of shared culture, language and history that tie our peoples together. As an Indian and as a citizen of a multiethnic pluralistic democracy, I believe that socio-economic development is predicated on the universal and fundamental principles of democracy, and respect for pluralism and human rights. India is firmly committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and for the peaceful and harmonious development of all sections of the Sri Lanka."

● LTTE 'no threat to India' says Thamilchelvan

May 10 - Any capability acquired by the Liberation Tigers is solely for the protection of the Tamil people and not a threat to India or any other country, the head of the LTTE's political wing, Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan, said this week in response to concern expressed by Indian officials over the movement's naval force and reports it had acquired aircraft

"The surprise and concern voiced by India surprises us," Mr. Thamilchelvan said in response to Indian External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh's comments on 7 May..

Mr. Singh was quoted in Indian press reports as saying "we are concerned about the LTTE having built an airstrip and having two aeroplanes, and there's news about more coming."

In comments made to the BBC's Tamil service and reproduced by Tamil news media, Mr Thamilchelvan said: "All our organisation's structures and efforts are aimed at protecting our people. This is not in any way a threat to any other country in general, particularly India."

"Our military efforts are aimed at combating the threat to our people, and not aimed at disrupting democracy or establishing a military regime. India or the Indian people or indeed any other people certainly need not fear this. I wish to state that this is purely for the self protection of our people and the defence of our homeland," he said.

The Indian home ministry's annual report this year was strongly critical of the LTTE, describing it as an "an extremely potent, most lethal and well-organised terrorist force."

The report also said that the LTTE's insistence on recognition of Sea Tigers, its naval wing "poses yet another threat to Indian security." Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Navy said three Indian warships visited Colombo last week.

"Three Indian Naval Ships 'Sukanya', 'Cuddalor', and 'Koshicode' entered Colombo harbour around 11.30 hrs on 4th May 2005 for replenishment," the SLN said. Cuddalor and Koshicode are minesweepers of the Pondicherry class. "Under trainees of Sri Lanka Navy were on board in order to get familiarized themselves with the mine-sweeping gears and mine-sweeping operations," the SLN said.

● CARE funds JVP projects

May 12 - The Janatha Vimukthi Perumana's (JVP), in spite of its public hostility towards foreign NGOs, has accepted financial donations from them. According to the JVP, CARE International is one of the institutional and private donors from whom the party has received well over Rs100 million for its own post-tsunami reconstruction activities.

The JVP's Relief Services Force has received funds from CARE for building of 100 houses for resettlement in "Shrama Abhimani Pura" (City of labour dignity), according to a JVP publication.

The bi-monthly bulletine 'Tissa' is published by the JVP Tissamaharama Pradesiya Sabha (PS). The report of CARE's assistance to the JVP was carried in a centre-page spread in its 2005 February- March edition.

In the wake of the December 26 tsunami, the JVP has been directly collecting contributions for its Relief Services Force. Amidst international shock and sympathy, the JVP had, by mid-January, been able to collect over Rs 100 million for its own projects, the party says.

In April this year, however, the JVP propaganda secretary, Wimal Weerawansa, told a packed audience at a party meeting that they needed to 'expose the NGO Mafia that is against the land and the country.' "We should spit on NGOs and stop them from walking on our streets. Donor countries and their NGO agents are holding this country to ransom, telling the government to set up a joint Tsunami relief mechanism with the LTTE," he said.

● NGOs should disclose funds

Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL), the watchdog on transparency and corruption, has said that all governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in tsunami-related work should make a voluntary disclosure of foreign funding and expenditure.

Several NGOs have requested the TISL to draft a set of guidelines on this matter. TISL said though it had agreed to do so, it might take some time.

It said that the lack of a legal framework making it compulsory for non governmental organisations and political parties to disclose sources of funding and expenditure provided ample opportunity for corruption.

"All funds coming for tsunami-related work should be used for that purpose and for nothing else. If it is used for something else, then it is corruption," TISL Executive Director J.C.Weliamuna said.

He said though the government had the machinery to monitor incoming foreign funds and expenditure with Parliament Oversight Committees and the Auditor General's Department, it did not give public and media access to the details.

"They must disclose the sources of funding - how much they got, what they plan to do and expenditure. We have issued a statement asking them to do so, and though some NGOs and political parties have disclosed the details in their websites, some are reluctant to say from whom they received funds," he said.

TISL strongly calls for urgent enactment of disclosure norms for all relief and reconstruction activities, he said. Recently at a seminar organised by the TISL and the Institute of Chartered Accountants, several NGOs said that abuse of foreign tsunami funds by NGOs was not investigated by any authority.

The Centre for Non Governmental Sector (CNGS) of the Finance Ministry and the Exchange Control Department of the Central Bank said they were not mandated to supervise and prevent any fraud committed by NGOs on foreign aid. CNGS said they had not received any complaints either. ❑

SL Development Forum Joint Communique

The following is the text of the Joint Communique issued at the conclusion of the two-day conference of the Sri Lanka Development Forum held on 16-17 May 2005:

The development partners commended the government and the people of Sri Lanka for their immediate and effective response to the tsunami tragedy. They noted with satisfaction the near completion of the first phase of the recovery process. The Government expressed its appreciation for the prompt and generous support it received from the international community.

The Government and the donor community issuing a joint communique at the conclusion of the Sri Lanka Development Forum said they particularly appreciated the three presentations made by the Government agents of Mullaitivu, Trincomalee and Matara, which graphically described the challenges on the ground in addressing the needs of the affected populations.

The development partners reaffirmed their continued commitment to assist Sri Lanka in the ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. They agreed that the reconstruction strategy that has been formulated based on a set of guiding principles that would include inter alia (a) allocation of resources based on identified local needs and priorities, (b) delegation or subsidiarity to the lowest level of government, (c) consultation with affected communities, (d) ensuring transparency, accountability and flexibility, (e) reduction of future vulnerabilities, (f) sensitivity to equity considerations and (g) effective coordination between the Government and development partners, should be operationalised.

While noting that financing was not an issue given that the pledges and commitments already made now stand at approximately US dollars 3 billion including debt relief, the Forum focused on the implementation challenges currently being faced, among which were the operationalising of the guiding principles and effective donor coordination.

The development partners noted the significant progress that had been made with respect to transitional housing and permanent housing, and stressed the importance of an early resolution of the problems related to land acquisition and allocation.

While recognizing the need for the establishment of appropriate buffer zones for coast conservation and safety, the development partners urged the government to adopt maximum flexibility to allow for a more practical implementation of the principle, especially in areas of acute land shortage.

The Government reiterated its commitment to a number of key initiatives with regard to the need to improve information flows and coordination mechanisms involving all key partners, including non-state stakeholders whose contribution is critical in the post-tsunami recovery effort; the clarity of roles at all levels and the determination to assign responsibility to the lowest possible level of government, while strengthening their capacity; and monitoring mechanisms with a focus on transparency, accountability and good governance.

For their part, the development partners committed themselves to assist Sri Lanka in these efforts and in ensuring that their pledges of financial and technical assistance would be realized, and to deepen their coordination process to minimise the burden on Government's administrative capacity.

The Government presented an analysis of recent economic developments and current economic conditions, and set our its plans for the medium-term. The development partners commended the Government for its endeavours to address the current macroeconomic imbalances and structural bottlenecks.

Among the areas of concern noted on the macroeconomic front were the need to raise investment especially for infrastructure, the need to strengthen government revenue performance to address the problem of continuing high fiscal deficits and growing public debt, and the need to reduce inflationary pressures that could be exacerbated by rising petroleum prices and high levels of inflows and domestic activity related to post-tsunami reconstruction.

The Government presented its discussion paper for a 'New Development Strategy, a Framework for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction' (FEGPR) based on accelerated growth, reduced regional imbalances, and improved opportunities for the poor. It also presented its report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as a number of more detailed presentations such as those on NCED, SEMA financial sector reforms, and administrative reforms.

The international community commended the Government for the quality of these reports. Development partners noted the issues of income distribution and regional disparity in economic activity in Sri Lanka and how these were impacting on the prospects for achieving MDGs.

While the proposals that had been introduced to the Forum were viewed as encouraging, it was agreed that more work was required, especially on how to improve the growth prospects for the poor. In particular, the principle of 'no growth, no poverty reduction' was espoused, and the Government was encouraged to continue to build consensus on the specific strategies for increasing economic growth.

The Government strongly indicated its intention to engage in reinvigorated efforts to complete its new Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) to achieve the MDGs. In particular, the Government committed it-

self to a wider consultation process with all its social, political and development partners, and declared its intention to complete this process in the coming months.

While committing itself to key economic reforms, the Government would pay particular attention to the reform design and sequencing of the implementation process.

The development partners offered their strong support for such efforts and looked forward to further discussions of the Government's PRS.

The participants welcomed the maintenance of the ceasefire agreement, the continued efforts to implement the National Plan of Action for Children, and the efforts toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

There was strong support for efforts to bring all communities into the process through a possible joint mechanism for managing post-tsunami assistance in the affected areas in the North and East.

The international community strongly endorsed the idea of such a mechanism and encouraged the parties to continue their efforts to bring it to fruition as soon as possible to ensure effective aid distribution at ground level. The Forum especially welcomed the strong commitment by Her Excellency the President in moving toward consensus building through wider consultation. Several partners indicated their support and cooperation for her initiative and commitment.

The partners expressed the hope that this joint mechanism would contribute to creating an environment that would lead to enhanced mutual trust and confidence-building between parties to the conflict, thus enhancing the prospects for peace.

There was a clear recognition that a just and durable peace acceptable to all her communities would remain the top priority on Sri Lanka's agenda and that with a return to lasting peace, maintenance of a macroeconomic stability and effective implementation of comprehensive PRS, prospects for sustained economic prosperity in Sri Lanka will be greatly enhanced. ❑

Violent incidents over Buddha statue

Tension in Trincomalee in eastern Sri Lanka has been running high accompanied by wave of violent incidents following the erection of a controversial Buddha statue in the Trincomalee town on Tuesday, 15 May.

Trincomalee district with an ethnically mixed population could easily turn out to be a flash point for a recurrence of widespread communal violence by the mischievous intervention by politically motivated elements in a highly volatile situation, a local lawyer said.

Normal life in Trincomalee town was disrupted on Tuesday, 17 May, when Tamil residents, responding to call made by the Trincomalee District Tamil Peoples Forum (TDTPF), observed a general shut down to protest against the unauthorized erection of a Buddha statue close to the Trincomalee bus stand. TDTPF had earlier been demanding the removal of the Buddha statue which had been erected recently.

Schools, provincial council offices, business establishments and bank branches were closed. Bus services came to a standstill around noon following two explosions that took place in the heart of the town. Around noon an explosion took place near the bus stand. The security forces diffused a live grenade found on the Dockyard Road later, police said.

Two conferences organized by the Police Monday evening and Tuesday morning to settle the dispute over the matter failed to reach a consensus. Hindu and Catholic priests, Muslim dignitaries and members of Buddhist clergy participated in these conferences, police said.

A person was injured in an explosion that took place Monday (16) night around 11 p.m. near the place where the Buddha statue was erected. Later in the same night a person was assaulted near Srimavopura, a suburb in the east port town, police said.

Tensions escalated in the town following explosions prompting the Police to clamp a curfew to bring the situation under control. Police imposed a curfew in Trincomalee town from Tuesday evening to Wednesday (18) morning following several explosions in which one died and three others injured. The incident took place Tuesday afternoon when an unidentified person threw a grenade targeting a shop in the Madathady junction in the east port town while the general shut down (hartal) was in progress, police said. The person killed in an explosion Tuesday afternoon was identified as Mr Susantha of Madathady, Trincomalee, police said.

There was heavy police presence and Monitors of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) based in the east port town also were watching the situation.

Court orders removal statue:

Mr.M. Ganesharajah, Trincomalee Magistrate and Additional District Judge Wednesday (18) instructed the Police to take all possible steps to temporarily remove the controversial Buddha statue erected near the bus stand by having direct talks with the parties concerned. Long-term solution to the matter can be found by legal action by the Urban Council, the magistrate had said, according to local sources.

The Magistrate further instructed the officers concerned to take legal steps on all other unauthorised temples of other faiths in the east port town after a careful review of registered complaints. He made this order following submissions by police officials that they have received reports of several unauthorised Hindu temples in the Trincomalee town.

The Police told the court that violent incidents had taken place during the general shut down in which one person was killed and three others

injured, legal sources said.

Lawyers appeared on behalf of the UC officials and TDTPF President told court that they revered Lord Buddha and were not against the Buddhist religion. But they said they suspected political motives behind the erection of the statue and only a court order for temporary removal of the statute would lead to the restoration of peace in the town.

The shutdown continued on Thursday (19) and Friday (20) with shops and schools closed and public transport at a standstill. Eleven more bombs exploded in separate locations in the Trincomalee city adding panic and fear among its citizens who went through the second day of a hartal imposed on them on Wednesday (18). Two persons injured by explosions were admitted to Trincomalee Teaching Hospital increasing the number of injured to five, police sources said.

Time bombs exploded at Abayapura, Padiththiya, Anuradhpura Junction and Paalukkwa, North East Sinhala Organisation's District Secretary Anura Bandara said.

The hartal in Trincomalee continued into its fifth day with the situation in the area remaining tense after some unidentified groups threw three hand grenades at some shops on Thursday (19) night and yesterday afternoon, police said.

They said two unidentified persons who came on a motorcycle had hurled the grenade at a Muslim hotel in Tyre Kade junction before riding away. Though no casualties were reported, heavy damage was caused to the windowpanes of the hotel. Two vehicles parked near the hotel were also damaged with their windscreens smashed. The reason for the attack was believed to have been the hotel owner's refusal to pay extortion money to a group allegedly backed by some politicians.

Police said that shortly after the first attack another grenade had been thrown at a jewellery shop in the Trincomalee town by some unknown persons but the grenade exploded inside a culvert. A motorcycle which was parked in front of a shop was also set ablaze by an unruly mob.

Meanwhile the Trincomalee police arrested two of the three persons who were seen running after throwing a hand grenade at a vegetable market in the town causing damages to the shops. No casualties were reported.

On Friday (20) a grenade was lobbed at a vegetable store while another shop was set ablaze as the military made several attempts to prevent backlashes. Trincomalee police say Friday's (20) incident was one of a wave of similar incidents that have taken place during the previous days.

As attempts to resolve the crisis failed, a grenade explosion was reported last night from the Mihindupura area of the Trinco town. Defence Secretary Asoka Jayawardena and security chiefs flew in to Trincomalee to preside over a conference to resolve the issue over the replacing of a small Buddha statue. Buddhist representatives boycotted the meeting, but JVP Parliamentarian Jayantha Wijesekara represented them.

Tamil groups represented by V. Vigneshwaran informed the security chiefs that they were expecting a response from the government within the next three days and would suspend the hartal till then. The Tamil groups are demanding that the new Buddha statue be removed. The Defence Secretary told the Tamil delegation he would consult President Chandrika Kumaratunga on the matter but said he could not assure any deadline would be met.

After this meeting, the security chiefs went to the Jayasunamaramya temple in the town for a meeting with some Buddhist monks. During the talks, Ven. Dehiowita Piyatissa Thera told the Defence chiefs that they would not remove the Buddha statue.

The four-day hartal has had serious repercussions on the civilians in the Trincomalee district after shops, banks, filling stations and Government institutions closed. The hartal has deprived public servants and pensioners of their May payments and they may have to wait until Wednesday because of the Vesak holidays. Large numbers of poor pensioners hopefully gathered at banks on Friday (20) but they waited in vain. One of them, T. Arumugam, said he barely survived with his pension and could not wait till Wednesday or Thursday the following week. Transport services were also crippled largely because the filling stations were shut down.

Most of the shops ran short of food and other essentials, though a few of them were opened. The town was rocked with fresh incidents on Friday with a Buddhist statue being damaged by unidentified persons late in the night.

Meanwhile, an unknown group had pelted stones and caused damage to windscreens of two lorries after burning a motorbike parked opposite a shop at central road, Trincomalee, in the early morning. In another incident, an unidentified person lobbed a hand grenade at a shop named Prasanna Hotel in Trincomalee Town at around 7.20 pm on 20 May. However, no damages or injuries were reported in that incident.

A fresh effort on 21 May by service commanders and the Inspector General of Police to resolve the crisis between the two sides ended in a deadlock, but the hartal campaign in the city was suspended for three days pending a government decision on the issue of placing a Buddhist statue.

Debate in parliament

When the deteriorating security situation in Trncomalee was taken up in the Sri Lanka parliament on 19 May, the Leader of the House Minister Maithripala Sirisena said that the Government would abide by the court decision in dealing with the dispute surrounding the erection of a Buddha statue in Trincomalee town.

Until such time, all measures would be taken to preserve law and order and prevent a breach of the peace in the area, he told Parliament. He said court had requested the parties to settle the matter amicably while the Government on the part would ensure that law and order was maintained.

"The Security Forces have been issued with specific instructions in this regard and a continuous surveillance is done," the Minister said.

However earlier, JHU MP Ven. Rathana Thera said there was a conspiracy afoot to drive away the Sinhala community from Trincomalee as in the case of Jaffna sometime ago.

The hartal campaign to remove the Buddha statue from Trincomalee town and the killings carried out by the LTTE in the East were aimed at ethnic cleansing, he said..

He said not less than eight kovils had been constructed in the Trincomalee town but no hue and cry was raised. "We have never opposed putting up kovils in the South, but the LTTE opposes the erecting of a Buddha Statue in the Trincomalee city." The monk MP said the Government should be more mindful about national security and not let a band of armed men call the shots. He said that the Government must take action to arrest those who carry weapons in Trincomalee and to conduct search operations in Colombo.

"We understand that there were three more grenade explosions. This campaign to drive the Sinhala people is intensifying and yet the government remains inactive," the Thera said. He said that in 1985, 25,000 Sinhala people lived in Jaffna. But because of the LTTE's ethnic cleansing, there were no Sinhalese people living in Jaffna today. He claimed that from Trincomalee 40,000 had been driven away, and now the situation in that town was worsening.

The Thera blamed the government for inaction and failing to arrest any suspects involved in the bomb attacks, and urged it to launch immediately search operations by the army in the eastern town to arrest armed elements.

The JHU parliamentarian's charges led to heated exchanges between leading JHU monks and some Tamil National Alliance MPs. Trincomalee District TNA MP R. Sampanthan said that Ratana Thero was trying to rouse trouble by making use of incidents in the East. The sudden installation of Buddha's statues in Trincomalee and Amparai districts by Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists, in the teeth of opposition from the local Tamils and Muslims, was part of an attempt to thwart any move to establish a Joint Mechanism with the LTTE, he said. Sambanthan asked the JHU to be moderate in their approach or they would be held responsible for possible disturbances in the country. ❑

MURDER MOST FOUL

Sivaram the rebel turned journalist

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

The late Dharmeratnam Sivaram, better known as Taraki, a well known journalist was abducted by four men in Bambalapitiya on April 28 and the body was found in the high security zone not far from the Parliamentary complex in Kotte in the suburbs of Colombo in early hours of the following morning. So far the exact place where he was assassinated remains a mystery. Many suspect that the assassination of Sivaram, who hailed from Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, might have been assassinated by the Karuna faction of the LTTE for his alleged support of the mainstream LTTE.

The murder of Sivaram the journalist has been roundly and justifiably condemned within Sri Lanka and internationally.

Before he emerged as a journalist championing the Tamil cause Sivaram, was a leading member of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) led by Uma Maheswaran. Like many other armed militant Tamil groups operating in the North-East before the 1987 Indo-Lanka pact, PLOTE too was engaged in the armed struggle to win the rights of the Tamils denied increasingly by the system of majoritarian rule since independence.

Mark Whitaker, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of South Carolina, Aiken, U.S.A, who is completing a biography of Dharmeratnam Sivaram's life and work in his article in the 'TamilNet' of April 29 has provided some information about the experiences of the former militant who became a widely known journalist.

In 1982 Sivaram joined the Ghandian Movement, then a front organization for the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). After Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict erupted into all-out war in 1983, Sivaram, under the alias "SR", soon became a prominent PLOTE militant. Sivaram's role in PLOTE was unique because he played an important part in both the organization's military and political wings. In 1988, a year after the Indo-Lankan accord, Uma Maheswaran appointed Sivaram as General Secretary of the Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF), the PLOTE's registered political party. Sivaram left the orgainsation in 1989 turning full time to journalism. Pen and not the gun was his sole weapon since then. He was the driving force behind TamilNet, the pro-LTTE website that many read to obtain views and news form a Tamil Tiger viewpoint. His views and analysis were in regular demand from members of the diplomatic community in Colombo. He also wrote a weekly column in the Daily Mirror under the pseudonym Taraki as well as columns in the Tamil media, notably in the Virakesari.

Sivaram's past as a member of an armed Tamil group helped him gain an insight into the militant movements and the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. This was clearly evident in his reports and analyses. He knew the aims of different strategies used by the Tigers to weaken the enemy and move towards the nationalistic goal – the creation of a separate Tamil state in the North-East. Sivaram as a Tamil nationalist advocated this aim in order to get the same rights and privileges enjoyed by the majority Sinhalese for the minority Tamils. He too felt the future of the Tamils in Sri Lanka will be insecure without liberating the North-East from the clutches of the Sinhalese dominated government in Colombo.

Former LTTE Eastern commander Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, alias Col Karuna, broke away in March last year from the Tamil rebel movement, accusing the Tiger leadership in Vanni of ignoring the grievances of Tamils in the east and trying to keep it under their control. Sivaram, himself from Batticaloa took a pan-Tamil nationalistic line and criticised Col Karuna for raising "regionalistic arguments" he felt would weaken the 'Tamil cause'. His support for Prabhakaran earned the displeasure of Karuna.

Special talent

His reporting of events relating to the N-E conflict was very similar to the way a talented lawyer would argue a case for his client. Anything unfavourable is left out and those considered favourable are well articulated to justify the disputed action. This helped the LTTE immensely in the confrontation with the Government and in the efforts to consolidate its position as the sole voice of the Tamil people.

In the Sunday Observer of June 6, Harinda Ranura Vidanage has paid tribute to Sivaram's use of cyber technology to win and sustain support for the Tamil cause all over the world. He wrote: "Siva understood the trends of cyber culture remarkably. He used to discuss in length the growth of this phenomenon and what potential we can harness from it. His operational ability on the net displayed the strategic use of web based news services. His expertise was sought in many states both by the civil society and the state on success of www.Tamilnet.com. Siva more than anybody else understood the emergence of a transnational Tamil Diaspora and the vacuum that was created by the lack of a solid network. The LTTE already had a huge network going from the eighties but I would identify TamilNet as an alternative network which gave voice to the voiceless, while always standing up for the Tamil cause.

All the Tigers may have had access to the TamilNet but all TamilNet surfers are not Tigers, thus in this context Siva exploited the ICT revolution to the maximum. This made him a very valuable asset to the Tamil interests and this took him closer to the LTTE. While Sinhala extremists perceived him to be a tiger claw in the Lions den, Tigers wanted his strategic insight and mastery of web-editing to benefit their own agenda."

Sivaram's belief that force was necessary to win the rights of the Tamils never diminished. His vociferous and hurting attacks on the Sinhala chauvinists too fitted in with the LTTE's positions. This also created some enemies amongst the Sinhala nationalists in the south. Although he tried to join the Tiger movement before embarking on his career as a journalist, it is said that he was not considered then by its hierarchy as a trustworthy person to be enrolled. His admiration for Prabhakaran became evident later through his writing.

Importance of Sivaram

As Vidanage has mentioned, the LTTE recognised the usefulness of Sivaram's contributions as the driving force of the TamilNet and his writings in the Colombo-based English and Tamil papers that espoused Tamil nationalism and the chosen path to create a separate Tamil state in North-East Sri Lanka. He presented the LTTE as a politico-military outfit vital for freeing the Tamils from Sinhala hegemony. It is probably because of this role that Sivaram played, he was conferred the "Maamanithar" award by the LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran on April 30. On this occasion the LTTE leader said: "A voice that echoed the freedom of the Tamil people and their homeland, Tamil Eelam had been silenced today. An eminent Tamil journalist had fallen victim to the enemy's act of cowardice. Through his writings, he brought out the Tamil National question in the international arena with clarity and cohesion. Diligently and cleverly, he exposed to the international and diplomatic community, the false propaganda undertaken by the Sinhala regime. Positioning him in the Sinhala stronghold, Sivaram forthrightly told the outer world the injustices and the atrocities perpetrated by the Sinhala ruling elite on the Tamil Nation. Although facing danger and threats, Sivaram fought against injustice fearlessly with courage. Above all, he relentlessly worked to keep the Tamil people politically vigilant. The yeoman service rendered by him is eternally praiseworthy. Death never destroys great men who had lived for lofty ideals."

Even after death the usefulness of Sivaram is recognised. The LTTE asked for the body to be brought to Kilinochchi for the people in the North to pay their respects. But his family was not in favour of this proposal and tactfully declained it. The LTTE then used Sivaram's murder to raise emotions to energise the support for its struggle. Demonstrations against the killing were held in the North. Its proxy, the TNA succeeded in bringing the issue before the Parliament. The adjournment motion moved in the Parliament on May 6 by the TNA group leader R. Sambandan, inter alia, stated:

* Mr.Sivaram's abduction and murder is brutal assault on the right to freedom of thought and the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The motive of the murder was to silence the pen of Mr.Sivaram. The crime has fascist orientations and needs to be roundly condemned.

* The crime is also a threat top free and fearless journalism in this country.

Opening the debate on the killing and abduction of Sivaram, the veteran Tamil politician said that the killers of reputed journalist Dharmaretnam Sivaram had acted with impunity and with a confidence that they could evade the law, and it was therefore necessary to initiate an international commission of inquiry into the killing. "Mr.Sivaram's abduction and murder is a brutal assault on the right to freedom of thought, expression and opinion, the most valued human and fundamental rights in a free and democratic society", he stressed. He warned: "as I have said in my motion this crime is a threat to free and fearless journalism in this country. If this trend continues free and fearless journalism could become the victim of the jackboot of fascism. If this trend were not stopped democracy would soon be dead in this country."

The previous day the TULF leader, V. Anandasangaree in a statement issued to the press challenged the TNA parliamentarians to condemn the killings of all journalists, academics and others, when they debate the killing of the TamilNet editor D. Sivaram in parliament. His statement highlighted the contradictory positions taken on the killings of other Tamil journalists, intellectuals and public servants by many Tamil politicians. Anandasangaree said: "I am fully appreciative of the TNA for taking up the issue in parliament and their demand for a parliamentary debate today. I also thank the party leaders for agreeing to their demand. I plead with the TNA to include the names of Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam who was also a brilliant writer. Cheliyan Perimppanayagam former mayor of Batticaloa also a good journalist, T. Kailanathan technical education director, other academics and journalists who had been killed. TNA must talk of all the people killed by the dictatorial LTTE, not only of the killing of Sivaram." He also expressed his sympathies to several other children who lost their fathers in the same manner.

The latest report of the Free Media Movement released after the assassination of D. Sivaram was also criticised by the online daily 'Asiantribune.com' (May 4) for lacking in balanced observations. To quote:. "The FMM report has failed to focus on the lone voices in the Tamil polity demanding the freedom of

expression, association and action they enjoyed in the pre-Prabhakaran phase of Sri Lankan politics. FMM is fully aware that dissenting Tamil journalists, Tamils academics and political activists are not only caught in the cross-fire of internecine Tamil warfare but are also eliminated at the first opportunity. Rival Tamil parties do not hesitate to indulge in revenge killing of journalists and independent Tamil voices. Neither the LTTE nor the other Tamil parties should be exempt from being named and shamed."

Media and Information Minister Mangala Samaraweera in a statement to the media condemned the brutal killing. His statement said: "All who value media freedom will deplore this gruesome killing. The UPFA Government, which cherishes the people's right to information without any hindrance, will never condone such actions. We have acted against those who tried to stifle the media, regardless of their stature and party affiliations. On the instruction of the President, security authorities have already commenced investigations into the killing. There will be no room for covering up any evidence and the culprits will be brought to justice as soon as possible."

The main opposition UNP used the brutal killing of Sivaram to accuse the present government of failure to maintain law and order. The party said: "The death of journalist D. Sivaram demonstrates the prevailing law of the jungle in the country." Given its foremost interest in toppling President Chandrika Kumaratunga's coalition government, the party has taken a negative stand on major national issues that need urgent attention. The rejection of President's invitation to discuss the latest 'joint mechanism' proposal for relief work in the North-East districts hit by the December 26 tsunami also illustrates its indifference. The killing and harassment of independent journalists also happened during UNP rule.

Four journalists were killed, three had to flee the country and dozens of journalists were assaulted during the last 12 months in Sri Lanka. The killings of Veerakesari journalist Aiyathurai Nadesan, Thinamurusu editor Bala Nadarajah Iyer (Chinna Bala) and provincial correspondent of Thinamurusu S. Kamalanathan who was shot and killed in Batticaloa are linked to the internecine Tamil warfare. Mylvaganam Nimalarajan, Nadarajah Atputharajah and Anthony Mariyanayagam were other Tamil journalists assassinated in the past four years. Ironically, the Tamil leaders who are now voicing their concern for the threat to freedom of thought, freedom of expression and democratic rights chose to remain silent even when their own colleagues in the Tamil democratic parties were murdered because of their independent views or trying alternative peaceful ways to regain the lost rights.

The public condemnation of the brutal killing of this outstanding journalist D.P. Sivaram and the demand for an international commission to investigate the murder is not solely motivated by human rights, freedom of thought and expression and democratic considerations. Similar protests in the case of other journalists killed because of their vocation would not have had the same impact worldwide. Public condemnation of the killings alleged to have been carried out the LTTE would have infuriated its leadership. What is significant in the wide

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and open condemnations of the killing of Sivaram, there are many both within and outside Sri Lanka whose feelings are genuine. In this lot are many Sinhalese journalists who knew him personally though some did not agree with his political views, especially his support to the LTTE. Because of the need to be brief, only a sample of the tributes paid to late Sivaram are presented below.

International condemnation

The Ambassador of Japan Akio Suda said: "I was shocked and extremely disturbed by the news of the abduction and killing of a senior journalist Dharmeratnam Sivaram. I express my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to his bereaved family and friends. Whatever be the background of the perpetrators, such a heinous act should not be tolerated. Freedom of speech is the very basic component of a democratic society and should be upheld and respected by one and all. This murder of a senior journalist is a blatant attack on democracy and the freedom of speech, and must not be ignored by those who advocate peace and democracy."

Reporters without Borders (RSF) said in its statement, editor of TamilNet and columnist of 'Daily Mirror' D. Sivaram, was targeted because of uncompromising coverage of the political and military situation, particularly since the emergence of the pro-government Tamil militia headed by Colonel Karuna. "The premeditated murder of one of the most renowned Tamil journalists is a huge loss for Sri Lanka's press. Through his website that was visited by tens of thousands of people daily, he provided essential news on the situation in the country," it said. "My life is in serious danger," he had told Reporters Without Borders in May 2004 after police raided his house and some pro-government media accused him of being a spy for the Tamil Tigers. RSF said Sri Lanka's authorities were guilty of failing to combat impunity in past cases of murders of journalists.

In a subsequent statement issued on May 10, RSF said: "We regret that the Norwegian authorities have never publicly condemned attacks against journalists by one of the two parties in conflict, while the document setting up the SLMM specifies that every violation should be the subject of an investigation." It further said: "The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has for too long ignored political murders and violations of press freedom. Peace is not built just by a halt in fighting, but also through the opportunity for civil society, including journalists, to work freely and safely. Peace also comes through justice."

The Hong Kong based Asian Human Rights Commission condemned the failure to address the series of killings which destabilizes the country to a great extent. It warned that until this central issue receives the attention it deserves, talk about bringing stability to the country will mean little, and the assassinations will continue. The New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also condemned the murder of Sivaram. Its Executive Director Ann Cooper said: "This audacious and brutal crime is an attack on free speech in Sri Lanka." Aidan White, General Secretary of The International Federation of Journalists said: "This is a shocking, tragic and senseless killing of a prominent and distinguished commentator who was a leading voice of the Tamil minority."

The President of the Foreign Correspondents' Association of Sri Lanka (FCA), Simon Gardner said he vehemently condemned the killing of journalist, D. Sivaram. "He was simply exercising his right to report freely on current affairs. To gun down an unarmed man is pure cowardice; to gun down a journalist is to attack freedom of speech." The FCA urged all parties to the ethnic conflict to bridge their differences without violence and to put an end to senseless murder. Aidan White, General Secretary of The International Federation of Journalists said: "This is a shocking, tragic and senseless killing of a prominent and distinguished commentator who was a leading voice of the Tamil minority."

Teresita Schaffer, former Ambassador of the United States to Sri Lanka and currently Director for South Asia, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, USA said in her message: "I knew Sivaram as one of the best political analysts in Sri Lanka, and someone who valued and defended his independence of thought and action. Sri Lanka and the Tamil community need people like him. His loss is a true tragedy, and whoever killed him has done great harm to the country and the community."

Prof. Tom Plate, Director of Asia Pacific Media Network, who is with the University of California, Los Angeles wrote in his article published in the Korean Times: "The anguish felt worldwide perhaps surprised the morally suspect government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga."

Sivaram was "a prolific writer and keen observer of his beloved but deeply troubled Sri Lanka, who was uncompromising, prescient and sometimes easily irritated."

Sri Lankan journalists

Thirumalai Manivannan of the BBC Tamil service said Dharmaretnam Sivaram was an active champion of Tamil nationalism, both prolific and controversial. He was the driving force behind TamilNet, the pro-Tamil Tiger website that has become a useful instrument over the past few years for accessing Tiger views and news. For journalists this killing is another sharp reminder of the perils of their profession. Whatever the motive for the killing or the identity of the killers, the murder has once more shown Colombo's security situation to be a shambles.

President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) Desmond Fernando PC stated: "The Executive Committee of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka expresses deep concern over the gruesome killing of D. Sivaram, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Taraki'. He was one of the ablest commentators on political and security matters. He was a specialist in his field and his writings were of the highest quality and were widely read and highly acclaimed by enlightened readers. He was well known for his fearless and independent views and it was probably these qualities which prompted persons with a hidden agenda to commit this despicable crime. Just as much as journalists have the right to express their views, the general public too is entitled to the right to information. The killing of any journalist is an attack on democratic values."

Chandana Keerthi Bandara Senior producer, BBC Sinhala Service in his tribute said, Sivaram during his last visit to London, a couple of months ago had talked about increasing death threats since the LTTE Eastern commander Karuna broke away from Tamil Tigers in March last year. Sivaram did not support the Karuna faction espousing an "Eastern Eelam" although he was a man from Batticaloa. He saw the separation of the North and the East as the downfall of the whole Tamil Liberation struggle. The concept of a Tamil Homeland, the rallying call of Tamil militancy is based on a united North and East. He was for a

separate Tamil identity in a united North and East. The BBC Sinhala Service producer said: "The man who braved battle fields, the man who wrote from government held territory highlighting the Tamil Liberation Struggle in inimitable English and Tamil without losing life or limb at the height of the civil war, felt that his life was now in danger. The man who could quote from the Tamil epic Manimehalai as well as Art of War by Sun Tzu with equal ease and who was counted as an authority on military analysis felt threatened a couple of months ago. But, he wanted to carry on with the work at home. We urged him to stay in London and carry on with publishing his website. 'How can I write the story properly if I am not in touch with the ground situation?' That is what made him a glowing beacon among military analysts. He knew the land; He knew the terrain; He knew why battles are won or lost. Therefore, when Siva said that he was threatened, it was serious. But, he was never concerned about his safety even while in hostile territory. It could well be a reason how he managed to command such a presence in a relatively short life span of 46 years."

Daily Mirror (editor Lalith Alahakoon) in the editorial comments April 30 stated: "From the barren deserts, the wastelands or wilderness, he gave a voice to those who had not spoken. He found the words for those whose lips were sealed and wrote the tune for those who sang no longer.

Many may have not agreed with the perceptions and view points of Dharmaratnam Sivaram especially in this era of half truths, half-baked analysis, bias or prejudice and a tendency towards sensationalism or muck-raking journalism. But like Dharmaratnam Sivaram we need a commitment to seeking unity in diversity by not only accepting but also respecting the views and beliefs of others. Among Dharmaratnam's closest friends were those who did not agree and often totally disagreed with what he said but he and they insisted that though they disagreed they would defend the other person's right to say and stand for what he or she believed in."

The Sunday Observer in the May 1 issue unreservedly condemned the dastardly murder of journalist D. Sivaram. It said: "He was a courageous journalist who neither hid his views nor refrained from expressing his convictions, however unpalatable they may be to the powers that be. His writings bore the hallmark of erudition, experience and knowledge but were never venomous. Various theories are being spun to explain the mystery behind the killing. Whoever did it for whatever reasons it is a stupidity of the first order. Guns cannot silence ideas. Whatever his political convictions no one has a right to take the life of another. Therefore, the Sunday Observer views with contempt attempts to justify his killing or provide an excuse for the killers. This crime reminds us of the volatility of the present political climate arising from our inability to find a peaceful way out of the ethnic crisis. The sooner we get out of the present stalemate in the peace process the better for the country."

The daily paper 'The Island' in its editorial May 7 said: "The killing of Taraki or Siva as he was fondly called is a dastardly crime which must be condemned by one and all. And the perpetrators must be brought to book fast. But the fact remains that Siva is not the only one who has been felled in that brutal manner. Many more Tamil leaders and intellectuals had been silenced before him. Of them, the legendary politician A. Amirthalingam and suave legal luminary Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvam stand out. People of such calibre are an asset not only to the community they belong to but also to the entire country." it was at 'The Island' where Sivaram first started his celebrated political column under the pseudonym Taraki a byline that was given to him by the then Editor of The Island Gamini Weerakoon.

The Srilanka Tamil Media Alliance in its statement strongly condemned the gruesome killing of veteran journalist Dharmeratnam Sivaram who contributed immensely to the contemporary political and military issues in the country. It said: Sivaram's gruesome death has also threatened the journalists with independent thinking and the media freedom at large. It sends a chilling message to the journalists already working in an atmosphere of fear.

Dayan Jayatilleka senior lecturer at the Colombo University and political analyst who was earlier a close associate of Sivaram wrote in the Asian Tribune April 29: "The abduction and murder of D Sivaram alias Taraki, is a crime and a stupidity. It is a crime not only in the simple legal sense but in an ethical and moral sense too. And if it were conducted in the anti-Tiger cause, it is a tactical and strategic stupidity, which will hurt

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that cause and help the Tigers far more than any single target I can think of. Sivaram challenged us with his writing. He was an uppity Tamil: confident, aware of Sinhala society and political trends, knowledgeable of international affairs. He held up a mirror before us. He was the Other in our midst. Now that he is dead, this is a lonelier place."

H. L. D. Mahindapala former editor of 'The Observer' and well-known as a harsh critic of the Tamil Tigers wrote, "Dharmaratnam Sivaram was way above the run-of-the-mill journalists working in Grub Street. He was a leading Tamil intellectual who is the latest to sacrifice his life in a beastly war that nobody wants to continue, except those who thrive in it. One of the cruelest aspects of this war is the loss of the lives of many valuable Tamil intellectuals. On Thursday (April 28) Sivaram joined the ranks of Neelan Thiruchelvam, Rajini Thirangama and a host of other Tamil intellectuals who risked their lives for the cause they championed." He also observed: "Sivaram threw new insights into conflict from the other side of the fence. He had the capacity to bring the power of his intellect to rationalize Tamil violence which, to his way of thinking, was a necessary tool for the 'liberation struggle of the Tamils'. ... His style and reasoning conveyed a sense of conviction which was possible to admire even by those who disagreed with him."

Journalist Tisaranee Gunasekara wrote: "D Sivaram used his pen in defence of one of the most violent organisations in the world. He should not have been responded to with a gun. He had a right to his opinion and to express that opinion, irrespective of the nature of that opinion. Any reaction to him should have come in the form of words – written and verbal – and not bullets. His murder has to be condemned even though he would not have used his pen to condemn the murder of a civilian like himself if the killing was done by the LTTE. He couldn't have done that even if he wanted to because of the nature of the master he served. Given the choices he made he had no choice but to condone and defend the systematic use of lethal violence by the Tigers to stifle dissent within the Tamil community."

Ajith Samaranayake of the Sunday Observer and a friend of Sivaram in his tribute said: "The Siva that I knew was no blind apologist for any cause but it is true that he would have identified certain broad historical currents of the Tamil movement for which he paid the supreme price. But it is also true that certain sections of the rabid Sinhala press and political opinion branded him as a 'Tiger.' Siva's commitment to the Tamil struggle did not preclude him from his own sound assessments of Sinhala politics. In that sense we are also the poorer for being deprived of the 'insights of this former Tamil militant into the murky world of Sinhala party politics, insights from which we could have gained immeasurably as a society."

It is apt to conclude this commentary by citing the tribute paid by Rajpal Abeynayake of the Sunday Times, who has been an intimate friend of Sivaram in recent years. Coming from his heart he wrote: "Ram was my friend - one of the closest, if not, as a matter of fact, the closest. That friendship intrigued many people, who saw us to be from the opposite ends of the political and ideological spectrum. But that's a different matter. He was a cosmopolitan, who counted the best among Sinhala intelligentsia and elite as his friends. A cursory list of his friends in Colombo if divulged here would boggle the minds of many and maybe even embarrass more in the bargain. The outsider would probably wonder how a man who was perceived to be the enemy of the 'Sinhala nation" so-called, could be on first name terms with the best elements of Sinhala society. Now that he has been killed, the best of Sinhala society seems to be in a daze. They feel that they have let themselves down badly; the obituaries that I have read so far of him lend abundantly to this feeling. Those who were opposed to him, at least at an ideological level, seemed to be having an attack of conscience. The unmistakable undertone of their jottings is: why were we so hard on him when he was living — we shouldn't have been?

His death should throw an open challenge to society. They couldn't see the man in his many dimensions as a few among us did, and was therefore guilty of a collective narrow mindedness which it now finds difficult to bear upon its collective conscience. Those who didn't engage him missed a great deal - for the simple reason nobody could come away from conversation with him without being intellectually enriched."

Concluding remarks

The brutal killing of another Tamil committed to the collective well-being of the Tamil community in multi-ethnic Sri Lanka fostering its language, culture and regional interests, while respecting the rights and similar interests of other communities is another stark reminder of the tragic consequences of ignoring the culture of violence and intimidation that has emerged as a result of the methods used in the struggle for liberation from Sinhala majority rule. Some of the Tamil leaders, who opted to remain silent on the practice of killing unarmed persons because of being perceived as a hindrance for capturing exclusive power soon became victims of this abhorrent culture. One dreads to think the kind of society that will come to stay if the ruthless practices continue without any consideration for the basic rights of the unarmed fellow Tamils just because they hold different views either on the political goal to be reached and/or disagree with the method currently used to achieve it. ❑

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Dance of hypocrisy on Taraki's grave

Lucien Rajakarunanayake

I was at my regular watering hole last evening sipping the usual old stuff, when fellow journalist Puvath Liyanagedera joined me. Ordering his own blend of spirits he spoke some words of caution. "Don't you think we must be careful in choosing our drinking companions? he asked.

"Don't we usually drink with friends we trust?" asked him.

"That may be," he said. "But in future we must make sure they are friends who will not run away if we happen to be abducted as we leave our watering hole, or not even bother to report the incident to the nearest police post, even if it happens to be right in front of the watering hole."

"Aha," I said, wisdom dawning on me despite the two drinks I had already taken.

"You are laying down the new Taraki code for safe drinking for all journalists."

"Whatever you may call it, we had all better be concerned about the people who invite us for a couple, that may be extended and also the NGO or trade union types they may bring along or later invite to join us."

I ordered another round for the two of us to show that I did share his concern about the drinking companions of journalists, not because of any harmful effects on the liver, but for the Taraki syndrome among one's drinking company.

"What do you think of the TNA's latest demonstration in parliament?" he asked me.

"With all the respect for the office of Speaker, I admit I do not envy the situation that Speaker Lokubandara was placed in by this latest example of TNA hypocrisy."

"Why do you call it hypocrisy? They were protesting against the killing of a Tamil journalist, who supported the cause of the LTTE-TNA axis of terror, which no doubt is his right, even if we may not have agreed with him," said Puvath Liyanagedera.

"I see it as the height of hypocrisy. What were these people such as Sampanthan, Raviraj, Ponnambalam Jr. Mavai Senathirajah, Joseph Pararajasingham and their ilk doing when other killings of Tamils were taking place with complete impunity? No doubt Taraki's killing calls for the most serious condemnation, but certainly not by these proxies of the LTTE."

"Why do you say that?" asked Rupa Dharshanaratne, a TV journalist who joined our company.

"I say their protest is both hollow and hypocritical. What were they doing when the LTTE carried out the first lamppost hanging of a so-called civilian traitor in Jaffna? Was that life not important? How many other such hangings were carried out and how many other opponents of the LTTE's thinking were eliminated, without these people making any protest, or asking for special inquiries?" "But this is a reputed Tamil journalist, so surely they should object," said Rupa.

"Wasn't Neelan Tiruchelvam a reputed Tamil intellectual and academic?" Why were they silent when Rajini Thiranagama was killed? Was it because her husband was a Sinhalese? Why did they not object when the broadcaster, Anthony Mariadas, was killed in cold blood when he came to cover the New Year's Eve mass at a Catholic Church in Vavuniya? If they are interested in journalism and the freedom of the media, what were they doing with their mouths shut when the LTTE closed down the "Eelanadu" and other regional newspapers in the North? Did they make such a fuss when the BBC's stringer Nimalarajan was killed by those said to be other than the LTTE? Why could they not protest when the late Gamini Navaratne, who sought to give an independent view of the crisis of the Tamils, was forced by the LTTE to stop editing the 'Saturday Review' from Jaffna? This was in addition to the problems he had to face from JRJ," I asked.

"Well that is quite a charge sheet," said Puvath Liyanagedara. "No doubt journalists have a special place in society, and attacks on them should attract all opprobrium. But the more important issue is the respect for the life of all humans; and respect for their views. Not to protest when those other than journalists are killed for their political views or political activity certainly amounts not just to cowardice, but also to compromise with terror."

"Yes, it is the caving in to terror when the same people do not condemn the killing of elected representatives of the Tamil people, whether they are Pradesheeya Sabha members, the Mayors of Jaffna, or other political activists, as we have seen happen with the EPDP members in recent months, especially after the ceasefire, rush to condemn the killing of a journalist.

I don't think those who remained mute when all those killings took place, have any right to protest at Taraki's killing.

In fact, their behaviour is both insult and injustice to the memory of Taraki, and his good journalism," I said. "What of the statement by Ranil Wickremesinghe that the government should accept responsibility for Taraki's killing" asked Rupa Dharshanaratne?

"Very interesting indeed" said Puvath. "A government is responsible to maintain law and order, but can it be held responsible for every breach of the law? Nonsense; to go by Ranil's logic, does he admit that the government of which he was a Cabinet member in 1988/89, should accept responsibility for all the killings of journalists and other media personnel at the time?" "There's more than that. He was Prime Minister when the government, through the Attorney General, stopped the court case into the murder of Richard de Zoysa, at a crucial stage. As Prime Minister, he was also responsible for preventing a commission of inquiry being appointed to probe Richard de Zoysa's killing. He and the Government he was a member of must accept all this responsibility, before pointing fingers at today's government for Taraki's killing," I said.

"In fact most of these people who today point one finger at the government for the killing of Taraki, should realise that there are four fingers pointing at themselves for not protesting or acquiescing in the killing of others," said Puvath.

"I wonder how these whited-sepulchres, participated in the protest organised by the Free Media Movement over Taraki's killing?" I asked.

"It might be due to the whirligig of politics today," said Puvath Liyanagedera.

"The true cause one represents is best seen from the company one keeps," said Rupa Dharshanaratne. ❑

HRW Calls to 'End Killings and Abductions of Tamil Civilians'

New York, May 24, 2005 - Ongoing killings and abductions of Tamils throughout Sri Lanka have created a climate of fear among Tamils across the country, the New York-based international human rights organisation, Human Rights Watch, said today.

Human Rights Watch called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into the killings and abductions in order to identify those responsible and recommend measures to end the abuses. The killing in early May of well-known Tamil journalist D. Sivaram by unknown assailants is only one of a long line of assassinations of outspoken members of the Tamil community. Since the beginning of the ceasefire between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in February 2002, an estimated 200 Tamils have been killed for apparently political reasons, though numerous such killings occurred prior to the ceasefire. As of November 2004, there had been 900 reports of abductions, of which almost 400 have been certified by the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) as violations of the ceasefire agreement.

The evidence available places responsibility for many of the killings on the Tamil Tigers. Most victims were considered to be LTTE opponents and in many cases there is circumstantial evidence of LTTE involvement, such as threats from LTTE members or agents prior to a killing. Other killings have been linked to persons loyal to Colonel Karuna, a Tamil Tiger commander who broke off from the LTTE in March 2004. A number of the victims were persons deemed to be supporters of one faction or the other.

The LTTE denies all involvement in the killings. The Sri Lankan government has not responded forcefully to the killings. The government claims it can do little to protect even obvious targets and the few investigations into killings it has conducted have been ineffectual.

"The ceasefire between the government and LTTE is welcome, but some are using it as an opportunity to kill their opponents," said Brad Adams, Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "Everyone hopes for a lasting peace, but this raises serious questions about what kind of peace it will be for Tamils who fall out of favor with the LTTE or other factions."

Government failure

In a country where Tamil grievances have been the primary cause of a protracted and complicated civil war, the failure by the government to pursue these killings is particularly troubling and raises serious questions about its stated commitment to take Tamil human rights concerns seriously. Following the attempted murder last year of Douglas Devananda, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) and a member of parliament, the government's initial response, delivered through its spokesperson Harim Peiris, was essentially to dismiss the attack, saying: "It is the LTTE going after a political opponent. It is that and absolutely nothing else."

In June 2003, following the killing in Jaffna of T. Subathiran, a senior member of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the police chose not to question the chief suspect in the case. It was not until late 2004 that the government spoke out condemning the spate of political killings, but this has not resulted in any concrete actions. There have been no prosecutions.

"Government announcements of investigations are welcome, but each and every case must be vigorously investigated," said Adams. "In all these years of killings, we have yet to see the government seriously investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for politically motivated killings of Tamils."

The international community, which is uniquely positioned to be heard in Sri Lanka, has also remained largely silent. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, responsible for monitoring and reporting on violations of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) between the government and the LTTE, only recently acknowledged that political killings of opposition Tamil activists by the LTTE are violations of the agreement, and therefore fall within its mandate. Disturbingly, it has stopped short of investigating any of the killings, although its mandate stipulates that they will "enquire" into complaints and violations of the CFA.

Donor Conference

Human Rights Watch noted that the Sri Lanka donor conference strongly endorsed a "joint mechanism" to coordinate tsunami aid with the LTTE, but did not demand an end to the political killings and abductions. Norway, the facilitator of the ceasefire agreement, and other key states, such as Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom have also chosen not to use their leverage to demand an end to the killings. The European Union and Canada have spoken out more recently in strong terms against the killings. EU Commissioner for external affairs, Benito Ferrero-Walnder, on March 8 publicly condemned the killings and abductions. She specifically called on the LTTE to stop the killings and to allow room for dissent within its areas of control. Human Rights Watch called on all external actors with influence in Sri Lanka to also speak out forcefully.

"The only way to end this campaign of violence and impunity is to refuse to ignore it," said Adams. "These killings are part of a concerted campaign to destroy opposition voices. The silence on the killings simply fuels more killings and leads to more impunity."

Impartial commission

Human Rights Watch supported calls by local human rights groups and others in Sri Lanka for the establishment of an independent and impartial commission of inquiry into the killings and abductions. Such an effort may serve as a deterrent to future violations and could start to address the culture of impunity in Sri Lanka. However, the organizations warned that serious security concerns must be addressed in order for such a commission to be able to conduct proper investigations.

"The LTTE has effectively silenced human rights groups in the east through fear and intimidation, and there is a real danger that a commission probing the killings would be similarly silenced," said Adams. "All sides must publicly commit themselves to cooperate with investigations and ensure the security of investigators."

Human Rights Watch pointed out that continuing violence in eastern Sri Lanka is particularly tragic given the reconstruction and rehabilitation work required in the aftermath of the devastating tsunami in December 2004. The violence intensifies the deep psychological and physical insecurity wrought by the tsunami, especially for Tamil communities in the eastern part of the country, where the bulk of the killings have taken place. ❑

Sri Lankan President on a political tightrope

K. Ratnayake

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga is facing sharp opposition, both from within government ranks and from outside, over her moves to set up a joint body with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to handle tsunami relief work. The campaign to stop the signing of an agreement, scheduled for next week, is being lead by her key government ally, the Janatha Vimkuthi Peramuna (JVP).

Because of pressure from the US and other powers, setting up the joint body with the LTTE has become a crucial issue for the president. The proposal was initiated by the US, the European Union (EU) and Japan as a way to channel funds for tsunami relief into areas under LTTE control. Such an arrangement would have the added advantage that it could be used to press for a resumption of the stalled peace talks to end the more than 20-year conflict between the LTTE and the Colombo government.

Though Kumaratunga agreed to the proposal, she has continued to drag her feet because the JVP has denounced it, saying it would amount to conferring recognition on the LTTE.

Tensions sharpened last month when Kumaratunga reiterated that she was prepared to come to an agreement with the LTTE. Pressure to resume the peace talks was mounted by the US and EU powers, with Christine Rocca, the US assistant secretary of state, and Erick Solheim, the Norwegian special envoy, both visiting Sri Lanka for talks with government and opposition leaders.

Diplomats have told the media that donor countries want both sides to move towards the creation of the joint body before a World Bank-sponsored development forum to be held in Kandy on May 16-17. These dates have become a deadline for the president, with a spokesman for the Asian Development Bank telling the Daily Mirror that the joint mechanism will be a key issue at the forum. After the launch of the joint mechanism, "we can pour in the required funds for relief and rebuilding," he said.

If Kumaratunga fails to meet the deadline, hundreds of millions of dollars pledged for tsunami relief could be lost. According to the Sri Lankan treasury secretary, out of $1.8 billion in pledges only $750 million has been received as commitments.

Knowing that she faces heavy opposition from all the Sinhala-chauvinist forces, above all her own JVP coalition partner, Kumaratunga has been desperately trying to cobble together support for the joint mechanism. The stakes are high. She told a meeting of Buddhist and Christian leaders on May 3 that "in the process the government might fall" and that she could "even lose the presidency," but those things were not in the national interest, "unlike bringing lasting peace to the country."

Trying to appease the Buddhist monks, who are at the centre of the Sinhala chauvinist movements, Kumaratunga said there was a "high degree of practical possibility of bringing the LTTE to the negotiating table" and that the "LTTE for the first time has agreed to accept the sovereignty of the government."

Nervous about chauvinist opposition, Kumaratunga has yet to publicly reveal details about the joint body. When religious leaders asked to see a draft, she said it was impossible but then provided details in a closed-door meeting.

According to information leaked to the media, the organisation will be known as the Post-tsunami Management Structure and will be limited to one year. Its operations will be confined to six tsunami-affected districts in the north and the east, to a distance of 2 kilometres from the sea. The peak national body will have three representatives—from the government, the LTTE and a Muslim organisation. The regional body will consist of five LTTE members, three Muslims and three from the government.

The Sinhala chauvinists are not the only source of opposition. Last week, Kumaratunga met with representatives of the Muslim peace secretariat, made up largely of MPs belonging to her own ruling coalition and to the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), which is aligned with the opposition. Members of the SLMC and even some Muslim MPs from the government have indicated they could not work with the LTTE. This opposition is being motivated by fears among some in the Muslim elite that they will miss out on the money being put into reconstruction and relief work.

Last Friday (10 May), Kumaratu-nga met with JVP leaders to explain her plans. The JVP has insisted that a joint body would strengthen the hand of the LTTE, giving it "acceptance" and "paving the way for UN recognition," and even that the LTTE would be conferred with "executive powers" under the proposed scheme.

These are gross exaggerations aimed at fanning chauvinism. The LTTE has agreed to the joint mechanism in order to demonstrate its readiness to accept the intervention of the major powers in dictating a so-called "political solution" to the war and in order to secure funds for the regions controlled by them. Nearly five months after the tsunami, anger among people in these already war-devastated regions is rising.

So far, the JVP has been unmoved by Kumaratunga's appeals. It has planned a series of meetings—the first one of which was held last Tuesday—under the slogan "No to the joint mechanism".

To intensify pressure, the JVP has unleashed its front organisation, the Patriotic National Movement (PNM), to campaign against the joint mechanism. PNM spokesman Elle Guna-wansa, a Buddhist monk, told the media that "over 30 religious and civil society organisations have expre-ssed support for our campaign." A spokesman for the JVP front organisation operating among the monks said the government could give the joint mechanism to the LTTE only over their dead bodies.

The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), another Buddhist-monk-led organisation competing with the JVP for Sinhala chauvinist support, has also joined the fray.

The United National Party, the main opposition party, is playing a duplicitous role so characteristic of all the bourgeois parties. For the past few months, it has been criticising the Kumaratunga for not working out a plan with the LTTE to distribute aid and start reconstruction. But as the campaign against the joint mechanism has heated up, the UNP, its eye firmly on the Sinhala chauvinist

constituency, has decided not to support the government. Rejecting an invitation from Kumaratunga to hear an explanation of the joint mechanism, UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe wrote that the party would respond "once the government reaches a final agreement with the LTTE."

For its part, the LTTE is afraid that it might miss a chance to enlist the support of the major powers to secure a settlement. Like the other parties, it is looking to use the inflow of aid and other funds to its own political advantage. In an interview with Reuters on May 7, LTTE political leader S.P. Thamilchelvan said the three-year truce was now in "jeopardy." Kumaratunga was dragging her feet in sharing the $2 billion aid pledged by donors, and it was doubtful if a deal would be implemented even if it were signed, he said.

The conflict has led to sharp divisions in the Sri Lankan media. The Daily Mirror expressed concern over the position of the UNP, saying that unless it was "bent on following opportunistic politics, thus jeopardising the country's larger interests," the opposition party should support the government's move to create a joint mechanism.

Other sections of the media, however, have given prominence to the JVP campaign. An editorial in the Island on May 6 exemplified the general tenor. "If a terror outfit refuses to listen to the US, the UK and the rest of the European Union and continues to recruit child soldiers, exhort money, assassinate politicians, massacre rivals, which country on this planet could control it? And how on earth could a legitimate government have a partnership with it while it continues such crimes?"

The government is becoming increasingly nervous about the situation. If the JVP withdraws the support of its 39 MPs, the government may collapse or be forced to rule as a minority. While being pressured by the major powers, Kumaratunga does not want to lose the support of the chauvinists or the military. Asked about the impasse, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar told a press conference that there was a "firm commitment" for the joint mechanism on the part of the president but then quickly added that aid agencies should not press the government with deadlines and "exacerbate sensibilities."

Kumaratunga faces bitter choices. On the one hand, if she signs the joint mechanism document she will lose the support of the JVP, possibly leading to the collapse of her government. On the other hand, if she does not sign, her refusal could be a final blow to the ceasefire agreement, opening the way for the resumption of the civil war. The dilemma is of her own making. When UNP leader Wickremesinghe was prime minister, Kumaratunga played the key role in rallying the military, the JVP and the JHU against the peace process initiated by his government.

Meanwhile, nearly five months after the tsunami, hundreds of thousands of victims are still being denied much needed relief and reconstruction. Such is the reactionary logic of the communal politics that characterises all the Sri Lankan bourgeois parties. ❑

'No More Tears Sister'

The Story Of An Assissinated Human Rights Activist, Dr. Rajani Thiranagama

Firdaus Ali

"Men in battle garb, whether they come with swords or guns, on a horse or in armoured cars, the price of conquest seems heightened by the violation of women," wrote Dr. Rajani Thiranagama, a few months before she was assassinated in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka.

And, it was exactly the subject of "woman and war" that captivated Montreal-based filmmaker Helene Klodowsky and formed the beginnings of yet another powerful film. "The real heroes in any war are the people. And, it is the strong women that help keep families, neighbourhoods, societies and nations alive during turbulent times, like in Sri Lanka," Helene said in a recent interview to Voice.

"One day some gun will silence me and it will not be held by an outsider but by the son born in the womb of this very society, from a woman with whom my history is shared," wrote Dr. Rajani in 1989, a few months before she was killed.

She was moved by the courageous story of Dr Rajani - a mother, anatomy professor, author and symbol of hope - who was killed at the age of thirty-five. "Rajani Thiranagama's life was marked with vision. Her tragic death demonstrates the dangers faced by women everywhere who are struggling for human rights in the face of violence and corruption," reflects Helene.

The filmmaker believed that by following Rajani's lifestory and the circumstances surrounding her untimely death, several themes could be explored simultaneously: nationalism vs. anti-nationalism, the lives of women as both participants and innocent victims of war, and the belief in armed struggle vs. a critique of militarism.

Helene has been writing and directing social, political and art documentaries for 20 years. A graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and Queen's University, her films have been screened and televised around the world and have won more than 25 awards.

Her recent film *"No More Tears Sister"* offered food for thought and triggered off animated debates, when shown at a world premiere at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto last month. The film will screen at the Seattle Film Festival, the Human Rights Watch Film Festival in New York and the Banff Television Festival later this spring.

"I knew that creating a portrait of a slain human rights activist would be no easy feat - especially given the fact that there were no surviving archives, few photos and, due to security concerns, no access to filming in Jaffna where Rajani lived and worked. In addition, most of her friends, former students and colleagues were far too fearful to speak about her on camera. Almost everything would have to be constructed, but based on careful research I wanted *"No More Tears Sister"* to reflect the passion and beauty of Rajani's ideals. I aimed at making a film that is political, feminist and aesthetic," adds Helene.

A story of love, revolution, and betrayal, "No More Tears Sister" explores the price of truth in times of war; Rajani was anti-war in every sense, openly condemning the LTTE's strategy and failures, just as she condemned the actions of the Sri Lankan military and the Indian Peace Keeping Force. She was shot dead as she cycled back home from the University one evening in September 1989. The bullets that killed her are believed to be that of an LTTE assassin's.

"One day some gun will silence me and it will not be held by an outsider but by the son born in the womb of this very society, from a woman with whom my history is shared," wrote Dr. Rajani in 1989, a few months before she was killed. And, to film her story, Helene travelled to the other side of the globe, researching and documenting one gutsy woman's journey and in the process opening up the violent, ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka, to the entire world.

Fifteen years after Rajani's death, her charismatic older sister Nirmala, a former Tamil militant and political prisoner, journeys back to Sri Lanka. She has decided to break her long silence about Rajani's passionate life, and her brutal slaying. Joining her are Rajani's husband, sisters, and grown daughters, as well as fellow activists forced underground. Stunningly photographed, using rare archival footage, intimate correspondence and poetic recreations, the story of Rajani and her family delves into rarely explored themes - revolutionary women and their dangerous pursuit of justice.

The film, a production of the National Film Board of Canada dwells on the theme: Sri Lankan Tamils must debate how to stop retributive killings in the community, not who's next.

The film, based mainly on interviews with members of Rajani's fam-

ily and on archival material, and narrated by the Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje, vividly captures her transformation from a sympathizer of the Tigers' cause to one of its fiercest critics.

Following Rajani's killing, Jaffna saw a few protests but they quickly fizzled out when the LTTE began contacting participants individually, asking them to pipe down.

As the documentary notes, those were the last spontaneous instances of free expression in northern Sri Lanka.

"The sensitive subject of the film made it impossible for a filmmaker from within Sri Lanka to make the film. Someone from outside was needed to tell Rajani's story," says Helene. The film was conceived of as a three-part series entitled Women and War.

"When I was first approached by the National Film Board of Canada to make a film about women and war, I considered myself up to the task. Besides making films about other conflict zones, I had lived close to the shadows of war. My mother survived the Lodz Ghetto and other concentration camps. Questions about war and women's experience in war were part of my daily vocabulary," recalls Helene.

She was drawn to the subject of women's experience of war in Sri Lanka - a conflict that scholar Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah has called the "ethnic fratricide" of his country.

Raging in various degrees of intensity since 1983, it has been one of the least known but more intractable wars of the postcolonial era. Labelled as a "forgotten war," it has caused at least 65,000 deaths, displaced up to one million people, resulted in severe human rights abuses, and compromised Sri Lanka's once promising development.

"I wanted to understand how ethnic conflict and nationalist struggles impact women - be they victims of war, militant fighters or peace builders. I wondered whether there was a feminist critique of both state and guerrilla violence? It was well known that the Sri Lankan military and the opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were both guilty of torture, illegal detention, disappearances and extrajudicial executions. I wanted to explore whether women were, on one hand, torn between loyalties to their ethnic community and, on the other hand, the community of women? Did oppressed minority women imagine fighting injustice in different ways than their male counterparts?"

Embracing feminism and a belief in human rights, Dr Rajani felt that women in particular were the primary casualties of war. This film powerfully demonstrates the risks faced by people everywhere who are working to promote human rights and protect innocent lives.

This was an important film because of its feminist perspective, its strong voice for human rights, and its resonance here in Canada, which is home to the world's largest Tamil community outside Sri Lanka. Like all communities who have migrated here, Tamil Canadians have brought with them their concerns about events taking place in their homeland. It is vital that Canadians understand the politics and social issues of Sri Lanka.

"Rajani had a vision for her people, the Sri Lankan Tamils. She envisioned a time when they would live in peace and dignity, enjoying democratic rights and freedoms. Standing against oppression and brutality in all its forms, she is a beacon of light for a community living in fear and struggling for self-respect. She will never be forgotten and is an icon for everyone in Sri Lanka fighting for freedom."

Helene's candid style of filmmaking accompanied by the interweaving of compelling personal narratives and complex political analysis makes the film unforgettable. Though set in Sri Lanka, Rajani's story has parallels in postcolonial societies around the world. She was part of a generation of political activists of the 1960s and '70s who dreamed of radically transforming their societies. Sadly, this idealism often fell victim to narrow nationalist agendas.

For years the government and rebels kept trying to bury the story of Rajani and only succeeded in having songs sung in her praise. In the midst of the ongoing conflict, Rajani's story constantly gives Sri Lankans a reason to affirm and celebrate themselves as a people. They should continue to do so in the name of peace and justice.

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"She was truly a heroine of our times and an unforegettable symbol of its enveloping tragedy. Rajani had a vision for her people, the Sri Lankan Tamils. She envisioned a time when they would live in peace and dignity enjoying democratic rights and freedoms. Standing against oppression and brutality in all its forms, she is a beacon of light for a community living in fear and struggling for self-respect. She will never be forgotten; an icon for everyone in Sri Lanka fighting for freedom."

- Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy,
Former UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women
and current chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

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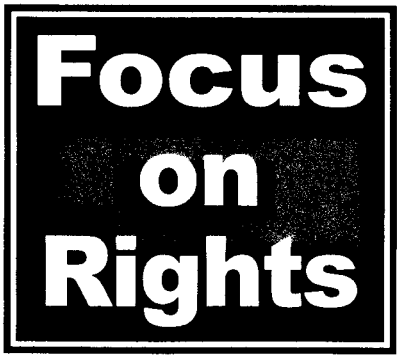

● UN asks Sri Lanka. to change its contempt of court laws

In deciding that the committal of lay litigant Anthony Michael Fernando to a term of one year rigorous imprisonment for contempt of court by Sri Lanka's Supreme Court violated his right not to be arbitrarily deprived of his liberty, the Geneva based United Nations Human Rights Committee has directed Sri Lanka to make such legislative changes as are necessary to avoid similar violations in the future.

The State has been further directed to pay Mr. Fernando compensation for the violation of Article 9(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR), and to respond to the Committee regarding the measures taken to give effect to its Views within ninety days of the decision.

It has also stated that the State cannot absolve itself of responsibility merely on the ground that actions of the judiciary are in issue. The Communication of Views delivered on 31, March 2003 will be filed of record in the United Nations General Assembly as part of the Committee's annual report.

Commenting on the decision, Mr. Fernando told The Sunday Times, "This is not a victory for myself. It is a victory for all those who stood up for justice and fair play, democracy, and the independence of the Judiciary in Sri Lanka. I would not wish that what I suffered would be undergone at any point by anyone else again. I came to court in the morning, was imprisoned in the afternoon and thereafter tortured and hospitalised. I was in prison for eight months. Many people turned away because my case was too controversial. There is some justice achieved now. But can money compensate me for all that I have suffered merely because I went into court one morning?"

Tony Michael Fernando, formerly an English teacher and father of an infant son, was sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment by a Supreme Court bench consisting of Chief Justice Sarath Nanda Silva and Justices Yapa and Edussuriya in February 2003 for raising his voice in court and persisting in filing fundamental rights applications. A later application urging the Court to revise its earlier order was dismissed by a bench of the same judges. Thereafter, he appealed to the Geneva based UN Committee in an individual communication pleading that his imprisonment violated Covenant rights.

He was represented before the UN Committee by lawyers Kishali Pinto Jayawardena and Suranjith Hewamanne. His appeal was assisted by the International Centre for the Protection of Rights (INTERIGHTS), United Kingdom, the Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong and the World Organisation Against Torture, Geneva.

Deciding in his favour, thirteen jurists of the UN Committee agreed without dissent that though courts, notably in common law jurisdictions, traditionally enjoy authority to maintain order and dignity in court debates by the exercise of a summary power to impose penalties for contempt of court, "no reasoned explanation has been provided by the court or the State party as to why such a severe and summary penalty was warranted in the exercise of the court's power to maintain orderly proceedings."

The Committee observed that the only disruption indicated by the State party is the repetitious filing of motions by Mr. Fernando for which an imposition of financial penalties would have been sufficient and one instance of 'raising his voice' in the presence of the court and refusing thereafter to apologise.

It stated further: "Article 9(1) of the Covenant forbids any 'arbitrary' deprivation of liberty. The imposition of a draconian penalty without adequate explanation and without independent procedural safeguards falls within that prohibition. The fact that an act constituting a violation of Article 9(1) is committed by the judicial branch of government cannot prevent the engagement of the responsibility of the State party as a whole."

Individual communications by citizens who feel that the organs of the Sri Lankan state, including the judiciary, have violated rights secured under the Covenant can be lodged before the Committee consisting of eminent and well respected jurists drawn from countries who have ratified or acceded to the Covenant as well as its Optional Protocol.

Article 2 (2) of the Covenant obliges every State party subject to the Covenant to take necessary steps to adopt such legislative measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognised in the Covenant.

● Editor faces contempt of court charge

Lankadeepa Editor in Chief Siri Ranasinghe has been directed by the Supreme Court to show cause why he should not be punished for contempt of court by publishing a statement from the UNP condemning the judgment in the Rohitha Bogollagama case.

Court ordered to issue summons on Mr. Ranasinghe directing him to appear in court on June 6. The charge sheet was filed when the case was taken up on 10 Msy before a bench comprising Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva and Justices Shirani Tilakawardene and Saleem Marsoof.

The Supreme Court took the view that the publication of the article amounted to contempt of the Supreme Court and was punishable in terms of Article 105 (3) of the Constitution and ordered Mr. Ranasinghe to show cause why he should not be punished. Earlier National Enterprise and Advanced Technology Minister Rohitha Bogollagama had lodged a complaint against the Lankadeepa Editor for publishing the UNP statement.

(continued on next page)

Tensions within multiculturalism and the federalist solution

Prof. S. Ratnajeevan H. Hoole

There is a natural tension within the concept of multiculturalism that its advocates do not realize and allow for. On the one hand, many of us say that Sri Lanka is a multicultural country where every citizen ought to be able to live anywhere and practice his culture. The view seemingly takes the moral high ground in terms of equality, liberty and justice.

On the other hand, weaker cultures - whether weak in terms of institutions or numbers - will not survive under this interpretation of multiculturalism. The stronger cultures dominate paying mere lip-service to the minorities. In time the minority-cultures will be marginalized and their very existence will be threatened. The right to practice and live one's culture therefore must be protected. One such means, in the Sri Lankan context where due to minorities living under long years of discriminatory legislation and adverse practices that have given the State the character of a Sinhalese state, is to provide a devolved region, where the culture can be protected and allowed to thrive.

Thus, unlike the first paradigm, multiculturalism provides for a protected territory. This dimension of multicu-lturalism runs counter to the first paradigm where anyone is free to live anywhere. This is the tension within multiculturalism.

The genius of federalism in this context is to provide areas where minorities can be in control. While in control it is easier to be generous with and accommodative of demographic changes that come about in the course of economic migration without the fear of being swamped. Federalism in fact accommodates the right of anyone to live anywhere and does so without any fear of being swamped.

Failure of the Unitary Structure

A look at Sri Lanka makes it quite obvious that the first paradigm of letting anyone live anywhere under a unitary structure has failed. This is seen clearly in recruitment patterns in Sri Lanka. Again, Sri Lankan is widely interpreted as Sinhalese-Buddhist and no one sees anything amiss. A recent research project, for example, tries to gather indigenous knowledge and the one person doing the job cannot speak Tamil. Clearly, it is as though Tamil indigenous knowledge is not part of Sri Lankan indigenous knowledge! In the teaching of history, "our kings" refers to Sinhalese kings, even playing down the fact that most of these kings were begotten by Tamil princesses from across the Straits. School histories hurt the dignity of the Tamils. Besides, there is so much acrimony in historical research that Tamil historians have felt pressured to toe the line or go abroad. I think it is better that we at least agree to disagree and allow a federal structure where minorities can send their children to school where their dignity is not negated through these distorted histories.

The inability to practice culture in a unitary structure is exemplified by the Federal Party's request in 1968 to have Koneswaram Temple precincts declared a sacred area. It was a time when the FP was in the coalition government of Dudley Senanayake. Dr. C.E. Godaku-mbura, a retired archaeological commissioner, argued in articles in The Sun (17.9 and 9.12 1968) that such a move would allow 'quislings' and 'fifth columnists' to entertain foreign agents in the temple precincts and facilitate an invasion of this country by India. True to the wisdom of his class, he argued that 'when Visakapatanam is developed as a naval base, Trincomalee will be easily accessible from there.' He saw agents of the invader coming in advance to the 'sacred city' as tourists and pilgrims to be entertained by 'collaborationists' etc. Dudley Senanayake refused the FP's request for reasons of 'national security'. The Federal Party had little to show for its cooperation. To add insult to injury, within Koneswaram Temple precincts in Fort Frederick, a brand new Buddhist temple was constructed, purporting it to be the replanting of the ancient Gokanna Vihare that had disappeared without a trace. It was the first time that a lost shrine was located with so much certainty without a trace of archaeological evidence to support it.

The Colonisation Example

The colonization of lands where Tamils are in majority, particularly as an instrument of state policy, is something that any Tamil would feel threatened by. A natural reaction is to ask for separation or adequate devolution that includes control over land. It is only when Tamils are in control of their own regions that they can be liberal and welcome Sinhalese in their midst in confidence and security; not as colonizers. The percentage of the Tamil-speaking population (including Muslims) in the Trincomalee District from 1921 to 1946 to 1953 to 1981 from the census exercises is 92.13, 75.09,

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(continued from page 24)

Mr. Ranasinghe had recently informed court that he was prepared to tender an apology to court if the Supreme Court felt the publication had lowered the dignity of Court by the publication of the statement, but refused to apologise to the Minister who lodged the complaint. The Supreme Court said it felt that the publication of the UNP statement critical of the Supreme Court judgment in favour of minister Bogollagama was an attack on the integrity of the Court.

Mr. Faiz Mustapha PC, Senior Counsel for the Editor-in-Chief said that if that were the case, his client was prepared to apologise to Court, but saw no reason to apologise to the Minister.

(Courtesy – Sunday Times)

78.80, and 65.38. In the Batticaloa District for the years 1921, 1946 and 1953 the figures are 93.12 92.55 and 87.64. After Batticaloa District was broken up into Amparai and Batticaloa Districts in 1961, the Tamil speaking figures for Amparai are 70.22% in 1963, 69.47% in 1971, 62.03% in 1981 and 60.67 in 2001.

The colonization of the East by the state is a classic example where the unitary structure has been used to eviscerate minorities there by settling mainly landless peasants from the South, (except in the Weli-Oya scheme where prisoners from Anuradhapura were brought in). Initially it was done to protect large land holdings in the South. But it ignored protests by Tamil and Muslim leaders about 1) their fear of marginalisation in representation, 2) land in the East now being denied to them for their natural growth and economic advancement, and importantly 3) security fears owing to the adoption of, in-effect, a Sinhalese supremacist ideology by the State, which became a reality with the 1956 Gal Oya riots and thereafter.

For those Sinhalese who cannot believe the militarism that went with colonisation, M. Herman Gunaratne's book (For a Sovereign State) is a must for the game it gives away. According to Guna-ratne, Jayawardene "happened to be present" at the Security Council meeting where a report apparently on the security of settlements was discussed. The report had been prepared by the lawyer S .L. Gunasekera and Davinda Senanayake and submitted to Brigadier Dennis Hapugalle, Chief of Civil Defence. Here is the high point — Gunaratne blames the authorities for settling Sinhalese there without weapons training which his group had planned to do at Maduru Oya.

Gal Oya and Mahaweli

The Gal Oya and Mahaweli schemes were the principal vehicles by which this marginalization occurred. The Gal Oya colony erupted in communal violence, within a short time of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's 'Sinhala Only' government being voted into power. In this scheme in the interior of the Eastern Province, Sinhalese elements largely drawn from the workforce attacked the Tamils who were there in significant numbers as settlers, professionals, government servants and traders. Tarzie Vittachi wrote: "Until Deputy Inspector-General of Police Sydney de Zoysa went there and threatened to arrest even Cabinet Ministers if they incited the mob to violence, the politicians made inflammatory speeches against police action." Vittachi clearly confirms the complicity of the highest levels of government.

Kantalai erupted during the 1977 violence claiming many Tamil lives. It had reduced the Tamils to living under an ever-present threat of violence and in total distrust of the State.

In the weeks preceding the July 83 violence, some officials in the Ministry of Mahaveli and Lands were active trying speedily to implement Mahaveli System M north of Trincomalee in the Yan Oya (River) basin. Like the subsequent System L in Manal Aru (Weli Oya) in the Mullaitivu District started the following year, it was to be another Mahaveli project without Mahaveli water!

The plan as these officials saw it was intended to sunder the contiguity of the largely Tamil-speaking North-East by establishing large Sinhalese settlements in the Yan Oya basin and then System B in the Maduru Oya basin. The story is described by Gunaratne (ibid.). The plan according to him had the approval of Gamini Disssanayake, who had promised to brief the President.

Also remarkable is the number of well educated people in high places who fell in line to do their bit for the cause. Gunaratne names Dr. A.N.S. Kulasinghe (Chairman), G.G. Jayawardene and H.B. Jayasekera of the Central Engineering Consultancy Bureau as showing tremendous enthusiasm for the project once he told them that the Minister had given his approval. Significantly, this was about 23rd July 1983. These men were, no doubt, excellent engineers. But motivated by Sinhalese elite ideology, they were thoughtless about transplanting the Sinhalese poor into conditions that were economically disastrous and politically explosive.

Patrick Peebles has written thus in his article titled Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka (Journal of Asian Studies, February 1990): "As late as May 1982 Mahaweli project officials claimed that Dry Zone settlements would defuse ethnic tension by reducing unemployment. They were unduly optimistic. Earlier colonization schemes had divided the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority long before either Mahaveli River development or ethnic violence accelerated...

The UNP consciously evoked the image of an idyllic Buddhist past in which the Dry Zone irrigation provided the resources for a prosperous and cultured civilization. Officials of the Accelerated Mahaveli Programme appealed directly to this mythical past, in which Tamil Hindu invaders were hated enemies, to mobilize Buddhist support."

In time, by the 1990s as my students from the East testify, they were lined up by the hundreds from their hostels and survived only because of knowing a few words of Sinhalese while the rest were shot by the STF. When this kind of land settlement created the Gal Oya and subsequent massacres leading to a more and more strident cry for separation, is such land settlement worth the price we have paid for it?

The World Bank's Inspection Panel

If good Sinhalese are still not convinced that the Mahaweli Scheme was not tied up to majoritarian militarism, they ought to read the Mossad Commission Report (1991) which draws attention to the following from the book by Viktor Ostrovsky and Claire Hoy (By Way of Deception, 1990, p. 69): "I was assigned to escort Jayewardene's daughter-in-law - a woman named Penny - on a secret visit to Israel. She knew me as 'Simon'... she insisted on telling me about the [Mahaveli] project and how money for it was financing equipment for the army. She was complaining that they weren't really getting on with it. Ironically, the project had been 'invented' to get money

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Conflicts cost Lanka $4.4 bn in just 5 years

P. K Balachandran

April 22 - Violent conflicts cost Sri Lanka $4.4 billion in just five years between 1983 and 1988, says Professor John Richardson, who teaches International Development at the American University.

In a study just brought out by the Kandy-based International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Richardson says that if one includes all the conflict-related expenditure and losses in those years of anti-Tamil rioting, armed conflict between the government and the Tamil militants, the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and the insurrection staged by the Sinhala-Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the cumulative cost was Sri Lankan Rupees 145.3 billion (or $4.4 billion as per the conversion rate at that time).

Richardson, who studied Sri Lankan conflicts for 20 years before writing his tome, divides the conflict-related losses and expenditure into three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary cost

He defines "primary cost" as the destruction of physical infrastructure. According to the Sri Lankan government's Master Plan for the Rehabilitation of Persons Displaced in the Disturbances of July 1983, 122 factories and 2,300 other commercial buildings were destroyed in the riots, which took place mainly in Colombo. From other sources, it is estimated that 20,000 houses were destroyed.

Using the cost estimates used by the government and the World Bank, it is estimated that the 1983 anti-Tamil riots cost SLRs 784 million in houses and SLR 169 million in commercial and industrial property.

The total primary cost of the riots was SLRs 953 million or $29 million

Destruction in the Tamil-speaking North East began with the rise of armed Tamil militancy in the latter part of 1983. Here again, according to government and World Bank estimates, between 1983 and July 1987, 69,400 houses were destroyed and 30,000 damaged. 11,300 commercial businesses were damaged and 8,000 completely destroyed.

In addition, irrigation structures, roads, bridges, water supply, power and transport systems and public buildings were destroyed. The cost was estimated to be SLRs 23.5 billion ($712 million).

Between July 1987 (the signing of the India-Sri Lanka Accord) and 1988, two new factors appeared in the Sri Lankan conflict. One was the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and the other is the insurgency led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in south Sri Lanka.

While the IPKF battled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Tamil-speaking North East, the Sri Lankan government had to face the JVP's insurgency in the Sinhala-speaking South.

In this period, the damage done to the North East was SLRs 12.7 billion and to the South was SLRs 9.2 billion.

Richardson puts the overall primary cost from July 1983 to 1988 at a little less than SLRs 50 billion ($1.4 billion).

"This is a conservative figure, but a huge sum for a nation of Sri Lanka's size and level of development," he comments. He further observes that this is what the Mahaweli Development Programme, Sri Lanka's largest development programme, cost.

(continued from page 26)

from the World Bank to pay for those weapons." While some may argue that the commission discredited the book, as Mervyn de Silva pointed out Ostrovsky stood his ground in a televised debate with a leading Israeli official and its contents have not been challenged since.

It is now becoming increasingly known that the World Bank is presently going through some soul-searching as to how its money declared to be for irrigation was used for socio-political engineering. Officials have been cautioned about examining this dimension prior to authorizing Sri Lankan grants. Today, the World Bank, with its Inspection Panel requires social impact assessment prior to funding and will investigate complaints on the ill-effects of projects under its sponsorship. Poignantly, the project settling ethnic Chinese in Tibet was aborted by the Bank's Inspection Panel after due investigation, despite powerful China's protests.

Looking Forward - to Federalism

As Sri Lankans we had had more than our share of problems and given these, there really is no point in insisting on the first paradigm of anyone being able to live anywhere. That can happen only when all the peoples [sic.] of this land feel secure, not only in terms of culture but even in terms of life.

Too many times have we come close to some accommodation from the times of the BC Pact only to have our hopes dashed by communal extremists. Once again there is talk of Federalism. The lack of democracy in the North is used as an excuse to deny Tamils their rights. But it is good to remember that it is when the settlement is negotiated that we can shape the kind of place the North-East will be. If the North-East breaks off because of continued intransigence over ceding the just rights of Tamils, we would then have no say at all over what happens there and indeed, the land will become unprofitable to everyone, whether Tamil, Muslim or Sinhalese. ❑

Secondary cost

Richardson has taken the conflicts' impact on three key sectors, namely, tourism, education and employment, as the secondary cost. With the inauguration of the Open Economy in 1977, tourism began to boom. Between 1977 and 1982, tourism increased by 150% to 400,000 arrivals. But in 1988, thanks to five years of intense conflict throughout the country, only 183,000 had arrived. The cost to tourism was SLRs 17 billion ($500 million).

This was roughly the amount of foreign aid that was disbursed in 1986," he observes.

The JVP's insurrection in the South took a heavy toll in terms of education. All universities in the South were closed most of the time from 1987 to 1989.Many secondary and primary schools were also closed. This led to an emigration of students and technically qualified people. And the on-going conflicts discouraged them from returning.

Immediately after the July 1983 riots, 15,000 factory workers, 3,500 plantation workers and 10,000 self-employed persons lost their jobs. The contraction of the tourist industry took away 30,000 jobs. While old jobs had gone, new had not come. In 1988, the country had reached record levels in unemployment with the figure touching one million or 18 per cent of the labour force.

Richardson puts the cost to the macro economy of Sri Lanka at SLRs 51 billion ($ 1.5 billion).

"Virtually all the ground that had been gained by open economy was lost," he observes.

Included in the secondary cost is the government's expenditure on the armed forces and the police and paramilitary. It was SLRs 1.54 billion in 1982, but had risen to SLRs 7.6 billion in 1988. Of this, SLRs 3.3 billion ($100 million) was accounted for by the import of arms.

Richardson says that the allocation of foreign exchange for defence purchases of this magnitude, Sri Lanka could not afford, given its balance of payments situation.

He puts the additional expenditure on the armed forces and public order machinery between 1983 and 1988 at SLRs 21.8 billion or $660 million.

Even though the IPKF was being funded entirely by the Indian government, Richardson includes the expenditure on the IPKF in his calculation of the secondary cost to Sri Lanka. The IPKF had around 500,000 troops in the island from July 1987 to March 1990.

"20 million rupees was the figure most frequently reported by the Sri Lankan and the Indian press as the daily cost of supporting IPKF operations. The IPKF operated in Sri Lanka for about 150 days in 1987, and throughout 1988 (366 days, a leap year). At 20 million rupees a day, the cost of these operations was 10.3 billion rupees ($300 million)," Richardson says.

The total secondary cost then was, SLRs 51 million, being the impact on tourism, education and employment, plus SLRs 21.8 million additional expenditure on defense and public order, plus SLRs 10.3 billion, the cost of the IPKF.

The total was SLRs 83.1 billion or $2.5 billion.

Tertiary cost

Tertiary cost refers to the impact of the conflicts on the viability of the Open Economy inaugurated in 1977 and on regional (South Asian) cooperation vis-à-vis Sri Lanka.

The Open Economy resulted in a 10 per cent growth rate between 1978 and 1982. There was an absolute reduction in poverty as employment and earnings went up. Normally unpopular measures like privatisation went through without difficulty because people had money in their pockets and jobs were available. But come July 1983, things changed radically for the worse, points out Richardson. Every aspect of the economy began to suffer. Government could not privatise and revitalise sick economic institutions.

Relations with India sank to an unprecedented low, with that country beginning to support the Tamil militants. This impeded Sri Lanka's economic growth. The SAARC summit could not be held in Colombo because of India's opposition. According to Richardson, Sri Lanka lost about SLRs 16.3 billion or $500 million on account of the tertiary factors.

He says that the primary, secondary and tertiary cost, put together, was SLRs 145.3 billion or $4.4 billion.

These expenditures and costs were by no means unavoidable and options other than those leading to a protracted conflict were available to policy makers in Sri Lanka, Richardson says. But sadly, these were not used. ❑

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The Pomp and Panoply of a Papal Passing Away as the Dust Settles

Paul Caspersz, sj

On the day following was the simple funeral of a dear friend. He was a man of much legal knowledge and experience, filled with the Spirit of truth and justice, fully dedicated to the service of faith through the promotion of justice, especially justice for the poor and the unjustly treated. He lived, because he could afford no better, in a small house, very difficult of access, on a steep hill off the beaten track in Nawalapitiya. Not for him even in his maddest dream did leaders of State and Church gather for his funeral from many nations of the world. Not for him a brilliantly televised final send-off, the glitter of bright ecclesiastical robes, flamboyant headgear and exotic footwear, exquisitely cut suits and gowns of mourning. And yet his was a life full of good deeds and of great service to his fellow human beings.

On the day of the simple, tearful funeral in Nawalapitiya, I naturally contrasted it with the lavish papal funeral in Rome. A third image came up before me: the funeral of the Galitean carpenter, lowered barely clothed from his ignominious hanging on a cross into the bosom of his mother and then taken away by a few men and some utterly devoted women to a tomb hewn out of a rock in a cave. Which of the two funerals, besides the Galilean's, gave greater hope for the future? I found it difficult to decide.

Many Achievements

Pope John Paul II doubtless had many and great achievements to his name: the triumph of Solidarity in his native Poland, the break-up of a vast monolithic empire, over a hundred media-covered visits to foreign lands in five continents, the appointment during his long papacy of all but three cardinals whom he knew would elect among themselves one of their own number to succeed him on the papal throne, the reining in of what he considered dangerous dissent, the unilateral and immediate removal of high officers in his Church whose more liberal stance he did not like, a life of courage, self-confidence and conviction.

So did my humble friend in Nawalapitiaya also have several achievements to his credit, albeit of a different stamp: advising free of charge hundreds of poor people how to obtain justice in the courts of law, maintaining, though never in great comfort, a united family of wife, three daughters and a son, inspiring all in his household and circle of friends with his own spirit of utter selflessness and service, opening the doors of his humble dwelling to anyone who wanted a bed for the night and food for the day, hiding his bodily ailments from everyone, always full of laughter and good cheer, inspiring with an infectious optimism hope for the day when every tear would be wiped away and a smile appear on every poor child's face.

Who achieved more in terms of selfless assistance to his fellow beings, in terms of planting the seed for a new and just and equal society? Who in his death recalled more forcefully the life and the death of the Galilean carpenter? Who received the greater welcome on the other side of the reef of life? Who can tell?

Many on the conservative right rejoiced as they witnessed the tottering of the Berlin wall and the breaking-up of the Communist empire, the result in part of John Paul II's interventions. Yet he vetoed politics to priests and sisters all over the world. He himself was certainly among the most political of the 264 Popes of the Roman Church. The difference was that he always considered his role to be a sacred one: anything which weakened Communist power was not political, but was of God working through him. Yet he warned his priests and other church officers, whose leader he was convinced God wanted him to be, that action for justice could easily become political. Over such action then he exercised his commanding veto.

Bipolar and Unipolar

John Paul II became Pope in a bipolar world. He left it a unipolar one. He had played his part in making the world that way. But as one year succeeded another, he came increasingly to understand that, though he had done all that depended on him to drive way the devil of communist materialism and atheism, it had returned stronger than before in the form of rampant free market consumerist materialism and the practical atheism of substituting for the worship of God the idolatry of Mammon or Money. The offspring of a free society turned at to be a monster. For the new materialist atheism was more insidious and totalitarian than the former one. John Paul II may even have signed for the return of something of the socialism which he had helped to destroy. But he was not given the time.

True Disciples

The disciples of Jesus, such as John Paul II and my Nawalapitiya friend, are called to the Service of Faith but of this Service of Faith the Promotion of Justice has in ecclesiastical documents recently been variously called an absolute requirement, a constitutive dimension, an integral part. Faith and Justice are the two sides of the same coin.

John Paul II and my Nawalapitiya friend both led exceptional lives. How many who were present at their funeral rites are ready to complete the unfinished agendas of the two men? ❑

NEWS TRACK

Karuna Group cadre shot dead: Apr 21 - A youth believed to be a Karuna Group cadre was killed by an unidentified gunman around 11.30 a.m. in Valaichenai, north of Batticaloa. He was gunned down by suspected LTTE gunmen on the Valaichenai Kalkudah road, according Police. The victim was identified as Mr. Sivagna-naselvam Kirubaharan, 25, of Kalladi Uppodai, a suburb of Batticaloa town.

Senior Police officer abducted: Apr 22 - A very senior Police intelligence officer, Inspector T. Jeyaratnam, has gone missing in Colombo since April 20, Sri Lanka's Inspector General of Police said. Mr.T. Jeyaratnam was a senior officer of the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lanka Police. He was the most experienced officer in carrying out investigations into terrorist activities. Police suspect that the LTTE might have abducted and taken him away to the Vanni.

Four injured in shooting: Apr 24 - A man identified as Rasamanickam Mathiyalahan, 31, the chief trustee of Aanaipanthi Chinna Pillaiyaar Temple in Batticaloa, was seriously wounded when a gunman opened fire on him in Batticaloa town on 24 April, Sunday morning. A Batticaloa jail employee and two children were also wounded in the firing. Police said the seriously wounded man was an ordinary civilian, adding that the gunmen allegedy belonging to the Tigers got away after the firing. The wounded jail worker was identified as Rajaratnam Rajasekaram, 43, and the children were Ms.Ravichandran Suhanya, 13 and Ms. Jeganathan Nithiyanandana, 12.

LTTE complains against STF: Apr 25 - The LTTE today lodged a complaint with Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission that commandos of the Special Task Force (STF), the elite counter insurgency arm of the Sri Lankan armed forces, had forcibly entered the LTTE political office in Navithanveli, southwest of Batticaloa. It alleged that the STF men were drunk and had caused damage to the office.

Firing on EPDP office: Apr 25 - Unidentified gunmen opened fire towards the EPDP office in Valaichenai in eastern Sri Lanka around noon on 25 April according to the Police. No one was hurt in the firing and the gunmen, allegedly belong ing to the LTTE got away, according to Valaichenai Police.

Karuna cadre killed, associate abducted: Apr 25 - A cadre of the LTTE's dissident Karuna Group was killed and his Singhalese colleague was abducted by gunmen, allegedly belonging to the LTTE in Karapola, an interior Tamil village in Polannaruwa district close to Batticaloa border, around 4.30 pm on 25 April. Police sources in the area said that the gunmen had fired on the victims who were in a house in Karapola. The Karuna Group cadre, who was seriously injured, died on admission to the Polannaruwa Base Hospital.

The dead cadre was identified as Mr. Sellathurai Kopalkumar, 22. His abducted Sinhalese colleague was identified as. W. Rana-tunga according to Police who said that the gunmen who abducted Ranatunga got away before they could arrive at the scene of the incident.

Police officer gunned down: Apr 27 - Unidentified gunman riding a motorbike shot a Sri Lanka Police intelligence operative in Chenkalady, north of Batticaloa around 5.30 pm on 27 April. He died on admission to Eravur Hospital, Police said. The Policeman was shot near the Chenkalady market, a high security zone area between Sri Lanka army garrison in Kommathurai and the Black Bridge checkpoint. The gunmen reportedly belonging to the LTTE got away. The dead Police intelligence officer was identified as Mr. Shelton Navaratna, 33, of Gokaralle.

Earlier in the day around 8.30 am. gunmen shot and wounded an EPDP cadre in the same area. The wounded EPDP cadre is Mr. Ariyathas Ramesh, 29, Police said.

Protest at SLMM HQ: Apr 27 - An organization calling itself 'National Fortress for Safeguarding Military Intelligence Officers' protested in front the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) headquarters in Colombo accusing the Nordic truce monitors of partiality. Five protestors who were allowed into the SLMM office handed over a letter to the truce monitors urging them to secure the release of Inspector Jeyaratnam, the senior Sri Lankan Police intelligence officer allegedly abducted by the Liberation Tigers during the previous week. The protestors shouted at the truce monitors, calling them 'white Tigers'.

Fall of Elephant Pass celebrations: April 28 – Fifth anniversary of the fall of Sri Lanka Army's (SLA's) Elephant Pass garrison to the LTE was celebrated from the 22nd to 25th April in Vanni with long distance running competitions among different military divisions of Liberation Tigers followed by a day of cultural events. The fall of Elephant Pass, described as "impregnable" by a US army officer who visited the garrison months before the fall, established the Tigers as the only non-state military force in the world today capable of complex manoeuvre war fighting, Said a report in the TamilNet website. Sharp-shooting competitions marked the final day of the celebrations. The Tigers' Northern Region Commander, Col Theepan, supervised the day's events at the LTTE Military Academy. The fall of Elephant Pass on 22 April 2000 established the Tigers as the world's only non-state military force capable of complex manoeuvre war fighting, LTTE sources said.

Hundreds of shooters including women cadres from Malathy brigade and Sothya brigade, fighters from Kutti Sri Mortar brigade and Charles Anthony Special brigade, instructors from military academy and LTTE officials participated in the competition.

"A sniper's job is to deliver discriminatory, accurate rifle fire against targets which cannot be engaged successfully by the regular rifleman because of range, size, location, fleeting nature, or visibility. Our cadres chosen for such training develop basic infantry skills to a high degree of perfection. The competition highlights the importance of snipers and allows our cadres to show their marksmanship," Col Theepan said.

Bomb attack on methodist parish home: April 28 - The parish residence of the Methodist Church in Kiran, 28 kilometres north of Batticaloa, was damaged in a grenade attack around 11.30 pm on 28 April. The pastor, Rev. N. Arulnathan and his family were away when unidentified persons lobbed a grenade at the parish home. The parish care taker was not injured in the blast.

Another killing in Batticaloa: April 28 - A member of the EPRLF was shot dead around 5.35 p.m. in Kallady, a suburb of Batticaloa town. He was gunned down near the Manning Bridge. The gunman allegedly belonging to the Tamil Tigers

who shot him got away, police said. The victim was identified as Mr. Murugesu Varatharajah, 40. He was residing at the Paddy Marketing Board camp for Tsunami refugees.

Journalist Sivaram murdered: April 29 - The body of the well known journalist and a senior editorial board member of TamilNet, Mr Dharmeratnam Sivaram, 46, who was abducted the previous night was found with gunshot wounds on his head in Himbulala, a suburb between Jayawardhenapura hospital and the Parliament building in Colombo on 29 Friday morning. The location is about 500 meters behind the parliamentary complex and lies inside a high security zone.

Mr Sivaram, a senior editorial board member of TamilNet, was abducted on 28 April, Thursday evening around 10.30 pm by unidentified persons in front of the Bambalapitya Police Station in Colombo. Family members who visited the scene identified the body.

Inspector of Police from the Thalangama Police division, Asoka Gunasekere, took the body to the hospital for post-mortem examination.

He leaves behind his wife Herly Yogaranjini (43) and three children: Vaishnavy (16), Vaitheky (13), and Seralathan (10).

Four men travelling in a Pajero abducted Sivaram late in the evening on 28 April as he was leaving a Colombo bar with friends, just a few metres from the Bambalapitya police station. Witnesses said the men were speaking Tamil.

TNA meets Indian Foreign Secretary: May 2 – A delegation of the Tamil National Alliance MPs met the visiting India's Foreign Secretary Mr. Shyam Saran in Colombo and reportedly told him that nothing tangible had occurred to further the Peace Process and that even the proposed post Tsunami Joint Mechanism had yet to be formed, according to a press release issued by the TNA.

Associated with the Foreign Secretary were the Indian High Commissioner Mrs. Nirupama Rao, the Under Secretary Mrs. Neelam Deo, the Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Mohan Kumar and the First Secretary (Political) Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill. The TNA delegation comprised of Mr. R. Sampanthan MP Parliamentary Group Leader, Mr.Mavai Senathirajah MP, Mr. Suresh Prema-chandran MP, Mr. Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam MP and Mr. N. Raviraj MP.

The TNA had urged that India should use its influence to bring about a change in the situation in Sri Lanka. The Foreign Secretary assured India was firmly committed to the well-being and interest of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and that India would bare that in mind in the dealings with the Sri Lanka government. The Foreign Secretary had urged that every endeavour should be made to prevent a return to the path of violence.

Protests mark Press Freedom Day: May 3 - Marking the World Press Freedom day, hundreds of journalists of print and electronic media demonstrated carrying placards with photos of Mr Sivaram and shouting slogans demanding freedom of expression, in front of the Fort railway station in Colombo.

Free media movement (FMM), Sri Lanka Tamil media Alliance, and journalists from other electronic and print media participated in the protest. The protest march started from Colombo Fort station, moved towards the Lake House circle, and turned back to the Fort station.

Protesters demanded Sri Lanka's President Ms Kumaratunge to hold independent inquiry to identify the killers. The meeting ended with FMM Chairmen Sunantha Desapriya, Editor of Sunday Observer Ajith Samaranayake, President of Sri Lanka Tamil Media Alliance Ananda Balakidnar speaking to the marchers. The protesters said that the killing was a serious threat to media freedom. The protest lasted about one and half hours. Police provided security to the event.

SL President to set up JM despite opposition: May 3 - President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge said an excellent opportunity has arisen to achieve peace in the island by establishing a Joint Mechanism (JM) with the LTTE to reconstruct the tsunami destroyed coastal areas in the northeast. Despite opposition and risk to her presidency, she was prepared to implement the JM proposal to bring peace to Sri Lanka, she said addressing a meeting of the National Council for Peace and Reconciliation attended by leaders of all faiths held Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo on 3 May.

The President further said some in the government were opposing the JM proposal. But if a referendum were held tomorrow about sixty percent would vote for the proposed JM. She was very keen in implementing the JM proposal to bring the LTTE into the process of democracy. "LTTE which fought for a separate state has now come to accept a joint mechanism with the government. Those who oppose JM proposal have no alternative," Ms Kumaratunge said.

UPFA announces domestic fuel price hike: May 4 - The government increased domestic fuel prices, petrol by six rupees, and diesel by four rupees and kerosene by three rupees, the increase coming into effect from midnight Wednesday, May 4, Mr.Jaliya Medagama, Chairman of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said.

The price increase is aimed at convincing multinational lend-

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ing institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) that the government is serious about reform, and taking steps to reduce consumption and ease pressure on the balance of payments, according to Finance Ministry sources. Government sources said two weeks earlier during talks with the IMF officials in Washington, Sri Lankan government promised to lift the fuel subsidy.

Youth shot dead at Dehiwela: May 5 - A Tamil youth identified by Police as Nadaraja Jeewaratnam (28) was shot dead at point blank range on Saturday (4) night in Dehiwela, Police said. According to the Police, unidentified persons had fired seven shots at the victim using a 9mm pistol around 9.10 pm along Second Lane, Dehiwela. Police informed by a neighbour rushed to the scene and had found a passport and an identity card belonging to the suspect. Police who tried to trace the address shown on the identity card and found the address at Jintupitiya, Colombo 13 to be fictitious. The victim was conducting tuition classes in Dehiwela. The police claimed that the victim once blonged to the LTTE.

Father of four found dead: May 6 - Mr. Kandiah Sritharan alias Mahalingam, a 55 year-old father of four children, was found dead with cut injuries on his neck May 6, Friday morning around 7.30 a.m in Vaarikutiyoor, a village about 13 km west of Vavuniya. Residents of the village found the body in a shrub jungle and informed the Police, sources said. Cheddikulam Police rushed to scene and recovered the body, Vavuniya Police said.

Compalints to SLMM by Tigers/SLA: May 6 - Mr.S.Elilan, Trincomalee district political head of the LTTE lodged a complaint on May 6 with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in the east port town that the Sri Lanka that Army soldiers located in Kaddaiparichchan camp had fired at the LTTE sentry in the LTTE controlled Muttur east. A team of SLMM monitors who visited the scene on receipt of the complaint is reported to have collected eight spent bullets found near the LTTE sentry point, Muttur.

Meanwhile, the SLA also made a complaint to the SLMM that its Kaddaiparichchan camp had been attacked by the LTTE on the same day. The Sri Lankan military said that the LTTE in another attempt to provoke Security forces on duty had fired around 350 rounds of T 56 gunfire over the Kattaparichchan Army detachment on 4 May, Saturday morning. They said that the fire was directed from a location approximately 400 m - 500 m away from the camp causing damage to roofs and treetops in the area. The LTTE fire had also caused damages to a few residences in the area. The fear stricken civilians who experienced the irresponsible LTTE act of violence in the night when they were about to sleep had rushed to the security forces camp premises seeking protection, the army said.

SLMM has commenced investigation into the two complaints.

World Bank will support displaced Muslims: May 6 - Mr.Peter Harrold, World Bank Country Representative in Sri Lanka, on May 6 said in Puttalam, a Muslim dominated town in the north of Western Province, that the World Bank would extend its full support to the implementation of the Joint Mechanism proposed by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for tsunami rehabilitation in the northeast.

Mr.Harrold paid a visit to Puttalam at the invitation of the Rehabilitation and Vanni Development Minister Mr.Rishard Baddiudin to see the condition of displaced Muslim families from Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Mannar and other areas now sheltered in 136 camps in Puttalam since 1990 after being driven out by the LTTE..

Mr. Harrold was taken to several camps where displaced Muslim families reside, according to sources in Puttalam. Mr. Harrold later addressing a gathering said the World Bank was prepared to provide assistance to the displaced Muslim families now sheltered in Puttalam.

Ranil declines President's invitation for talks: May 7 - Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe, leader of the main opposition United National Party (UNP) declined the invitation extended by Sri Lanka's President MsChandrika Kumar-atunge for a discussion on national issues including the proposed joint mechanism between the government and the LTTE. "There is no necessity for such discussion at present," said Mr Wickremasinghe in reply to Ms Kumaratunge, reported the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) in its morning news bulletin on May 7.

Ms Kumaratunge had expressed her dismay over the rejection of her invitation and had expressed her concern in her reply to Mr.Wickremasinghe, the SLBC reported. Mr Wickremasinghe had also reportedly told the President that no one from his party UNP would attend the discussion with her.

Two LTTE cadres killed: May 7 - Two bullet ridden bodies found in Pollonnorawa police division near the border of Batticaloa District were identified as Capt.Suban (Arasaretnam Vigneswaran of Valaththapitty) and Lt.Nilavarasan (Rasalingam Shankar of Kaluwankerny), both belonging to the LTTE, according to Tamil Tiger sources.

Their bodies were taken to Valaichenai hopital, 32 km. north of Batticaloa, where a post mortem inquiry was held. Reports said that arrangements have been made to hand over the bodies to the LTTE through the the Internationational Red Cross.

One killed and several injured as police open fire: May 8 - Sri Lankan Police opened fire Monday (6) when Tamil activists attending a rally demanded the removal of a new Army checkpoint in the Batticoloa area in eastern Sri Lanka. One demonstrator was killed and another 15 were wounded. Five women were among those wounded when soldiers and police fired for over 10 minutes at Chanthiveli, Batticaloa. The firing took place as the SLMM ceasefire monitors and news reporters as witnessed the incident. The dead man was identified as a protestor named Mr. Kandasamy.

Over 2,000 people, including children from the schools drafted into join the protest on both sides of the checkpoint and demanded that a security checkpoint there be removed. The Army checkpoint was set up recently between Kiran and Morakkeddanchenai, to which the LTTE had reportedly objected and raised anxieties amongst local residents. According to military sources, the LTTE had instigated the civilians in the area to protest against the Shanthiveli road block as it had become a hindrance for the LTTE cadres coming there by sea to cross to the areas under the LTTE in Kaluvankerni. LTTE cadres in the guise of fishermen used to cross this area to enter the LTTE areas in Kaluvankerni and regular checks by the Army and Police had made their task difficult, they said.

Military Spokesman Brigadier Daya Ratnayake said Army and Police manning the checkpoint at Shanthiveli had to fire shots into the air to control the violent protestors instigated by the militants. "The mob had turned violent started pelting stones and missiles at the Police and the Army personnel. They grew violent around 10.30 am," he said. The three Policemen and the five Army men including one officer injured in the incident were admitted to Polonnaruwa base hospital.

The protestors smashed the windscreen of the Army vehicle belonging to the Commanding Officer of the 12th Artillery Regiment, Major Anura Hewamanna. According to Brigadier Ratnayake, the Shanthiveli roadblock was established one month back due to growing tension in the area following reported attacks on the Wanni faction of the LTTE by Karuna faction cadres.

SLA, LTTE discuss Trinco situation: May 9 - Officials of the Sri Lanka Government security forces and the LTTE in the Trincomalee district met for discussions on the ground situation and to review complaints made by both parties to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) over recent firing incidents, sources said. The hour long meeting was held at the SLMM Trincomalee office in the presence of Mr.Jan Ledang, Trincomalee head of the SLMM.

Embargo on cement, diesel, petrol and other materials to LTTE controlled areas by the SLA through its Kaddaiparichchan army camp, also was discussed at the meeting, sources said.

Major General Balasuriya, General Officer Commanding of the Trincomalee district, led the SLA delegation, with Brigadier Udumalgalla accompanying him. Mr. H N.B.Ambanwela, Senior Superintendent of Police led the police delegation. Trincomalee district political head Mr.S.Elilan led the LTTE delegation.

Northeast shuts down over checkpoint gunfire: May 10 - The normal life was disrupted in several parts of the districts of Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai, in the Northeast province Tuesday following a hartal (general shut down) condemning the attack on protesting civilians by Sri Lankan security forces at Santhiveli in Batticaloa, Monday, 9 May, in which one person was killed and more than 15 others, including 5 school children were injured.

In Jaffna district civilians and police clashed in Chavakachcheri as Police fired tear gas to disperse protesting civilians. A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) sentry was damaged during the clash. In Trincomalee three explosions were heard in the heart of town between 10 and 11 a.m. Sri Lanka Police said that hand grenades were not involved and speculated that the sound was from explosives used for demolition.

Across the Northeast, schools were closed and Provincial Council offices did not function, as employees did not report for work. Central government offices were also closed. State and private banks did not operate. Business establishments were shut. In many areas state and private bus services almost came to a standstill, sources said.

In Batticaloa black flags were hoisted on several houses and buildings. Train services were suspended and the public market was closed down, sources said More police, army and navy personnel have been deployed major junctions in the towns and other areas in Army controlled areas. Riot police squads were deployed to prevent any trouble breaking out, sources said.

JVP vows to scuttle aid deal: May 10 - Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's main coalition partner, held a massive rally at the Colombo Municipal Council Ground on May 10 against the Government entering into any agreement with the LTTE to handle post-tsunami reconstruction in the northeast.

JVP leaders including Somawanse Amerasinghe, propaganda Secretary and Colombo District Parliamentarian Wimal Weerawansa, General Secretary Tilvin Silva, parliamentarians, Regional organisers, Buddhist Monks and thousands of party supporters carrying red flags attended public rally.

While Ms Kumaratunga was making preparations for a meeting with foreign diplomats to brief them on the proposed joint mechanism JVP vowed to defeat the government plans. Mr. Tilvin Silva addressing the rally warned, "JVP will never allow President Ms.Kumaratunga and UPFA government enter into a joint mechanism with LTTE. The day an agreement is signed, UPFA government will fall." JVP holds 39 seats including four cabinet Ministers in the 225-member Parliament.

In a move to silence critics JVP spelt out alternatives to the joint mechanism for disbursing tsunami funds in the North and East.

Mobile library service launched: May 11 - Foundation for Co-Existence (FCE), with financial support from the People in Need (PIN), a non-governmental organization headquartered in Czech Republic, started a mobile library service in Trincomalee district to assist tsunami-affected students and others who have no access to libraries and reading rooms, sources said.

The inaugural event was held Monday in the Trincomalee Town Hall with Mr.K.Sivapalan, Attorney-at-Law in the chair. Mr.Petr Navrat, Financial Manager of the PIN mission in Sri Lanka was a special guest to the event. Mr Navrat launched the mobile library service by cutting the ribbon.

Mr.Y.Jeyamurugan, Co-ordinator, FCE, said the mobile library service will help encourage reading habit in the community and will especially help students affected by tsunami. About three thousand books in the Trinco-malee public library had been damaged in tsunami when tidal waves on December 26 entered the library building, he said.

Under this project a vehicle has been provided to FCE to conduct mobile service to remote villages, Eachchilampathu and other areas. "We will be taking the vehicle to welfare centres where tsunami affected students are sheltered as our survey conducted had shown that sixty percent of students prefer borrowing textbooks through mobile service," Mr.Jeyamurugan said.

Four policemen wounded in attack: May 12 - Four policemen were wounded when unidentified gunmen opened fire and lobbed grenade at vehicles in which a local leader of the paramilitary Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), Mr. S. Sivanandan and seven of his men were travelling, sources said. The attack took place at Valaic-henai, 30 kilometers north of Batticaloa.

The policemen were amongst those escorting the EPDP group, sources said. The gunmen allegedly belong to the LTTE attacked the pajero 4x4 and another van between the offices of the Assistant Superintendent of Police and Divisional Secretary on the Batticaloa-Valaichenai main road, around 11.30 a.m., according to the police.

The wounded policemen were identified as Sunil,26, Jayatilake,28, Sarathunga,28, Jayasinghe,32, all attached to Batticalao police station. They were taken to Valaichenai hospital and latter transferred to Batticaloa hospital, according to medical sources.

Dispute over landmine clearance in no-man'sland: May 13 - The Sri Lanka Army said that the LTTE had obstructed the Army's humanitarian mine clearance team from clearing a patch of mined land on the side of the A9 road to prepare a civilian crossing point in northern Sri lanka.

The A9 road, which runs through the no-man's land between the Omanthai forward defence lines and the LTTE forward defence lines, is very narrow and congested and is difficult for civilians to cross. The land on either side of the A9 road is mined. Therefore the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) requested the Vavuniya District Secretary to clear the western side of the A9 road to a width of 15 metres and a length of 169.5 metres to prepare a route for civilians to walk.

However, the LTTE had obstructed the Army's mine clearance unit when it got ready to commence the clearance work on May 10, and had allegedly issued a warning through an ICRC officer that they would attack if the mine clearance team was deployed.

Body found in Eastern University: May 13 - The body of a man shot in the head was found dumped in grounds of the Eastern University at Vanthaarumoolai, 18 kilometres north of Batticaloa town around 7 a.m. on 13 May, Police said. A note left behind by the assassins stated that he was a LTTE member from Uppuveli in the Trincomalee district, they said. The person was identified as Vimalenthiran Manojkumar, about 25 years, the police said.

SLRC wins prestigious Spanish award: May 13 - The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) was awarded the prestigious Spanish Red Cross Society Gold medal for 2005 in recognition of its outstanding work towards the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Mr. Jagath Abeyasinghe, President of SLRCS received the award on behalf of thousands of SLRCS volunteers at the ceremony chaired by Her Majestic Queen Sofia of Spain in Madrid on the 10th of May, SLRCS sources said.

"We have not yet recovered from the shock caused by the enormous tragedy of the tsunami in the Southeast Asian countries, which led to the biggest relief operation in the history of our organization, and which will result in a prolonged recovery phase. The Red Cross and Red Crescent reiterates today its conviction that defeating poverty, and therefore its allies disease, illiteracy, and violence, is not impossible at all," President of Spanish Red Cross Society Mr. Juan Manuel Suarez del Toro in his address at the event said.

"I accept this award on behalf of the thousands of our dedicated volunteers spread out in every single district of our island. This award makes us reflect on our humanitarian mission to some of the most vulnerable in our society, whilst rededicating ourselves to the tremendous challenges ahead," Mr. Abeyasinghe emphasized.

Chained and tortured youth escape: May 14 - Two men who were reportedly detained in an LTTE camp in the Sampur area in the Trincomalee district. managed to escape and surrender to security forces personnel. One of them identified as Selvarajah Selvakumar, 19, from a village near Trincomalee escaped on Thursday (12) and surrendered to Navy personnel deployed in the Trincomalee harbour area while the other man identified as Subramanium Vigneswara escaped on Friday (13) and surrendered to army personnel at Kattaparichchan.

Both men had been shackled but had managed to escape with the chains still on their ankles, security sources said. Selvakumar said he had been tortured after his abduction for refusing to join the LTTE. One of the youths, showing the marks on his legs told police he had tried to escape several times but failed and thus he was chained and tortured. He said two other youths had tried to escape with him but he did not know what happened to them. He swam about one kilometre before surrendering to the Navy.

A few minutes after Selvakumar surrendered, 12 LTTE cadres had arrived at Sampur beach with T-56 rifles and fired 50-60 rounds before withdrawing to the jungle, Navy sources claimed.

Akashi meets Thamilchelvan: May 14 - The Japanese special peace envoy Mr.Yasushi Akashi met with the Head of the Political Wing of the LTTE S.P. Thamilchelvan at LTTE's Peace Secretariat building in Kilinochchi, on 14 May. Mr.Akio Suda, Japanese Ambassador and Mr. Kenji Miyata, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan accompanied Mr. Akashi.

Associated with Mr.Tamilselvan in the meeting were P.Nadesan, head of Tamileelam police, Mr. Ialnthirayan, Political Head of Batticaloa-Amparai Districts, Mr.S.Puleedevan, secretary general of the LTTE peace secretariat.

Protests against joint mechanism: May 15 - Hundreds of Buddhist monks belonging to Jathika Sangha Sammelanaya (JSS - National Buddhist Congress) held a protest march in Colombo on May 15 against any deal with the LTTE for a Joint Mechanism to facilitate post-tsunami reconstruction in the NorthEast.. The protesters marched to the office of Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mr Mahinda Rajapakshe and handed over a memorandum.

The Buddhist Monks carrying the National and Buddhist flags attended the protest march under the banner of "Against Joint Mechanism deal and Against legalizing Tiger terrorism." Before they started protest march the monks held meeting at New Town Hall building with many speakers denouncing Sri Lanka Government's attempt to strike a deal with the LTTE on the Joint Mechanism. The Monks handed over the Memorandum to the Prime Minister's acting sectretary Mr. Gamini Thenakoon and waited for more than one hour inside the Prime Minister office before meeting the Prime Minister.

TNA kept out of Development Forum: May 15 - The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) protested against being kept out of participation in the Sri Lanka Development Forum held on 16-17 of May 2005 in Kandy the central hill capital of the island.

The TNA received an invitation to the inaugural ceremony of the Sri Lanka Development Forum to be held at Earl's Regency Hotel, Kandy, but it did not extend to the Development Forum two-day discussions held on at Mahaweli Beach Hotel, Kandy.

Mr R Sampanthan, Leader of the parliamentary group of the TNA, in a letter he wrote to the Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. Sarath Amunugama, pointing out that the TNA

"had 22 members in Parliament elected on the votes cast in the North East, said,

"The programme formulated for the Sri Lanka Development Forum (SLDF) which is to be held in Kandy on May 16th and 17th seeks to marginalize the North East and fails to recognise diversity, and respect the democratic verdict of the people of the North East,"

Decamps from LTTE police: May 15 - A 21-year-old youth from Avarangal North, Puttur who had decamped from the LTTE "Police" and surrendered to the ICRC was handed over to the Vavuniya Police for further investigations. The youth named Jothi Shankar Sharma alleged that he was forcibly recruited to the LTTE 'Police' promising a monthly salary. Although he has served for nearly one year he was never being paid any salary and he decided leave it disgruntled.

Tamil refugees die in Mannar Sea: May 15 - Seven Sri Lankan Tamil refugees of fourteen returning from Ramanathapuram coast in South India to Talaimannar died when their boat capsized in sea due to rough weather on 15 May, Saturday early morning. However seven other refugees escaped by swimming to a nearby sandbank in the Sri Lanka territorial waters. All fourteen left by a boat from Ramanathapuram Friday night around 11 p.m., Mannar legal sources said.

A Sri Lankan Naval craft, which was on its routine patrol, rescued the seven refugees from the sandbank, brought them to the Talaimannar shore and handed them over to the Police. Two women of the seven rescued were immediately admitted to the Mannar government hospital as they suffered from dehydration and exhaustion. The rest including four men and a boy were produced in the Mannar magistrate court.

Mr.Muttiah Ganesh (32), one of the survivors said that one of the seven died when the boat capsized was his fifty three year old father Shanmugavel Muthiah who was the father of five children. A father, mother and their child also died in the boat mishap, he said.

Hands tied and killed: May 15 - An LTTE Sea Tiger cadre was found with hands tied behind him on the Valaichchena road at Vandaramulla in Batticaloa Friday (13) morning by the security forces. Military sources said that the body was found opposite the Eastern University. Taking the responsibility for the killing, Karuna faction had left a note on the body that said in Tamil: "Lying here is 25 year old Sea Tiger V. Manojkumar and this is punishment for Prabhakaran's insatiable thirst for blood - Karuna faction"..

The gunman had used a 9 mm pistol to kill Manojkumar after tying his hand and blindfolding him. Meanwhile, five Wanni cadres, who went missing since Tuesday (10) at Pillumalai, in Mahaoya in the Ampara district have been found in a drunken coma in a paddy filed. They had reportedly gone to collect wood to the nearby jungle and had failed to return. Later civilians had come across the Wanni cadres in a drunken coma in a paddy field.

60,000 SL refugees in India await repatriation: May 15 - Around 60,000 Sri Lankan refugees in India await to be repatriated while around 14,000 have returned to the country illegally. Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation, Dr. A. S. Kunasingham said. The United Nation High Commissioner on Refugees had brought back around 3,000 of the refugees while their set target for this year is around 6,000.

The UNHCR has pledged to bring back more provided the two governments are agreeable to it. Kunasingham said the Ministry of RRR had written to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to urge the Indian Government to quicken the pace of repatriating Sri Lankan refugees living in South India.

"The government will not keep them in transit camps once they return." hey would be sent home with assistance given akin to the internally displaced persons of the North and East, he stated. The returning refuges would be given Rs. 25,000 with other infrastructural facilities to enable them to restart their lives.

However, government sources reiterated that there was still a large number remaining - waiting eagerly to return to their own country. "We cannot expect the UNHCR to bring them back as it would take a very long time." The authorities concerned and the relevant ministries should take the necessary steps to expedite the pace of return'85 it is their responsibility, they said. "Or else those refugees would continue to use illegal means of return," sources said.

Boy shot dead near check point: May 16 A 17-year-old boy was found shot dead in the vicinity of an army checkpoint at Batticaloa bus depot on Sunday (15) morning. The unidentified victim had been shot twice in the head and neck. According to Batticaloa police the boy was believed to have been killed at another place before his body was dumped near the checkpoint. The reason for the killing is yet to be established though police suspect that he was slain as a result of LTTE activities. The body is lying at Batticaloa hospital morgue for identification.

Auto-rickshaw driver shot dead: May 16 - Two unidentified persons speeding on a motorbike shot and killed Mr. Vishvalingam Arunkumar, 23, at Thandavanveli in Arunagiri lane, Batticaloa town. The incident took place not very far from the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) checkpoint at 6.20 pm on 16 May. Mr. Arunkumar is a resident of Koolaavadi 1st cross street, Batticaloa.

Housing project for war hit North-East: May 17 - The Government is to launch a massive Rs. 7.5 billion project to construct 31,500 war affected houses in the North and East parallel to the permanent housing projects for the tsunami affected in the province, according to Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation Ministry Secretary M. S. Jayasinghe. The project to be completed over four years commencing this year will be launched on May 19. The project launch follows the successful completion of the pilot project to construct 860 houses in the North and East last year, he said.

The construction process is scheduled to commence on June 1."The World Bank has agreed to increase the money from Rs. 150,000 per house to Rs. 250,000 following the Government decision to grant Rs.250,000 to construct tsunami affected houses," Jayasinghe added.

RRR Ministry Senior Advisor S. Sivadasan said Rs. 250,000 will be provided for the construction of 500 square feet houses fully damaged during the conflict. Rs. 100,000 will be issued to reconstruct partly damaged houses. The project will cover Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts and will be implemented under the supervision of the Chief Secretary of the North East Provincial Council with the Project Management Unit in Trincomalee.

The RRR Ministry has also released Rs.45 million each for

Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts to construct 100 houses for tsunami affected people in each of these districts. "This will be released for the most deserving tsunami affected people in Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts," he said.

360 LTTE cadres surrender since CFA: May 17 - Three hundred and sixty LTTE cadres have surrendered to the Sri Lanka Army since the ceasefire agreement signed between the government and the LTTE three years ago. The youngest member surrendered to the Army is aged ten and the oldest, fifty. Among the surrendered are eighty seven female cadres Sri Lankan army sources claimed.

Among the surrendered LTTE cadres were thirty seven male cadres and twelve females below the age of fifteen years and one hundred and three males and twenty eight females below the age of eighteen. One hundred and fifty males and ten females were between the ages of nineteen and thirty while three males were over thirty years of age. There were no female cadres over thirty years of age. The Army said details of fifteen cadres surrendered to them were not available

The highest numbers surrendered to the Army were from Trincoamlee, one hundred and twelve followed by ninety twofrom Batticaloa. One each was from Kurunegala and Colombo. Forty six had surrendered from Ampara, nine from Jaffna, eleven from Mannar, ten from Mullaitivu, thirty two from Polonnaruwa, twenty nine from Vauniya and two from Welioya.

The Army had handed the surrendered LTTE cadres over to the police and thereafter through courts to their parents and guardians.

EPDP member shot dead: May 18 - Arumugampillai Alias Mohan (35), a member of the Eelam People's Democratic Part (EPDP) was shot dead at Batticaloa market in high security zone at 9.20 am on 18 May, security sources said. Mohan worked at the EPDP's Batticaloa officee. The EPDP has accused the LTTE of carrying out the murder. Mohan was on his way to the market with police personnel to buy provisions when he was shot. He was taken to the Batticaloa hospital where he died at around 10.30 am about an hour after being admitted to the hospital.

Two civilians at the market were also wounded in the incident. One of them is identified as Vellupillai Navaratnam,50, of Pump house road, Palameenmadhu, Batticaloa.

UC former Chairman shot: May 18 - Mr.Periyapodi Suriyamoorthy, former Chairman of the Trincomalee Urban Council was shot by unidentified persons Wednesday (18) night around 9.30 p.m. He was admitted to the Trincomalee General Hospital, police said.

The incident took place when he was at his residence along Vihare Road, close to Trincomalee Police Headquarters and the bungalow of the Trincomalee Magistrate, police said. Mr.Suriyamoorthy sustained injuries in his abdomen and was admitted to the intensive care ward. Later as his condition turned crtical, he was airlifted to a Colombo hospital.

An independent group led by Mr. Suriyamoorthy won the election for the Trincomalee UC in 1994. He was Chairman of the Trincomalee Urban Council between 1994 and 2000. Mr.Suriyamoorthy was a member and chairman of the elected North East Provincial Council since 1989 till the then President R.Premadasa dissolved it in 1990. Since then the NEPC is administered by the central government..

STF trooper wounded in landmine blast: May 19 - A trooper of the elite Special Task Force (STF) was injured when the vehicle he was driving was hit by a claymore land mine which detonated at around 9.30am near the 9th milepost on the Monaragala-Ampara Road, police sources said.

The Defender jeep, being driven by the Constable Kalansuriya, was escorting a Prison Department bus, which was transporting some prisoners to the Monaragala Prison, they said.

Japan to give US$90m loan assistance: May 19 - Japan is to provide Sri Lanka a US$90 million for infrastructure rehabilitation and small business revival of tsunami affected areas, a press release from Japanese embassy issued in Colombo said.

The Government of Japan pledged Yen Loan assistance of 10,006 million Yen (approximately Rs 9,206 million) to the Government of Sri Lanka to support tsunami relief programs. This is in addition to the grant of US $ 80 million (approximately Rs. 8 billion) provided under its Non-Project Grant Aid during January this year for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in tsunami affected areas in the country. This Loan is provided towards the Sri Lanka Tsunami Affected Area Recovery and Takeoff (STAART) Project. Loans under this scheme are offered on highly concessionary terms and administered by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)," the press release said.

Body of missing soldier found: May 19 – The body of a soldier of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) who was reported missing from 17 May during training in the forward defence line in Kilali high security zone in Thenmaradchchi division along Jaffna-Kandy highway was recovered Wednesday (18) from nearby shrub jungle by fellow army men, security sources said. Chavakachcheri Magistrate Mr.P.Subramaniam visited the scene Wednesday evening and held the inquest. The Magistrate further ordered the Police to send the body of the soldier to the Colombo national hospital for post-mortem and to submit the report in court later.

JHU to boycott Parliament if JM is signed: May 19 - Jathika Hela Urumaya monks after going in a procession to Pettah in Colombo from Parliament, staged a sathyagraha near the Bodhiraja Viharaya and vowed to do everything possible to stop the government from signing an agreement for a joint mechanism with the LTTE.

The monks also protested against the violence that took place in Trincomalee Town, after a dispute over the construction of a Buddha statue. JHU leader the Venerable Ellawala Medhananda Thera said the LTTE should be made to lay down its arms before signing an agreement for a joint mechanism. He also called upon the government to destroy the new air strip built by the LTTE. JHU parliamentary group leader Ven. Athureliye Rathana Thera said JHU monks would boycott parliament if the President went ahead with the joint mechanism.

Body of Muslim youth found: May 19 - The body of a Muslim youth who was allegedly shot dead by the LTTE pistol gang opposite the Valachchanai railway station was discovered by the Valachchanai police around 5.15 p.m. on 19 May. The deceased was identified as 25 year old Segu Ismail Jessim of

(continued on page 41)

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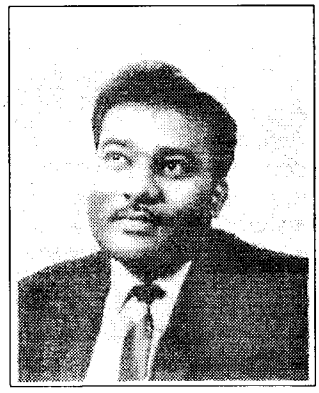
About People and Events

IN MEMORIAMS

Second Year Remembrance



In ever loving and cherished memory of
Mr. Sithamparapillai Thiruchelvam
who passed away on 5th May 2003.

Your enduring love and light continues to inspire us. Deeply missed and always remembered with love by your devoted wife Dhanapathy, daughter Sharmini and son Shanjeev.

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**Close to Hospital Road, Jaffna,
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And the sound of a voice that is still.***
Lovingly remembered and profoundly missed by his parents Jeganathan and Shakunthala; sister Mythili; brothers Janarthana and Sanjayan and their families.

Ninth Anniversary Remembrance

In loving memory of
Mrs. Ranjini Geetanjai Thirunavukarasu
on the ninth anniversary of her passing away
on 24th May 1996

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband Thirunavukarasu; children Poornima and Pradeep; father Mahalingam; sisters Mrs Lalitha Dilkushi Karunakaran and Priyadarshini Damayanthy; brothers Premkumar, Mohankumar, Ranjitkumar, Nimalkumar and Tilakumar; brothers-in-law Karunakaran and Balanathan; sisters-in-law Kamalarani,Vijayalaxmi, Nirmala, Yasothara, Nalini, Kamaladevi and Sugirthadevi – M.Ranjitkumar, 12 Chase Lane, Barkingside, Essex IG6 1BH. Tel: 020 8518 5759.

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FORTHCOMINGS EVENTS

June 1. Feast of Dedication of Westminster Cathedral
2. Eekathasi
4. Sani Pirathosam
5. Amavasai; Karthigai; Feast of St. Boniface
6. Feast of St. Norbert
7. Feast of the Most Holy Trinity
9. Feast of st. Ephrem
10. Sathurthi
11. Feast of St. Barnabas
12. Shashti
14. Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
18. Eekathasi
19. Pirathosam
20. Feast of St. Alban
21. Full Moon; Feast of St Aloysius Gonzaga
24. Sankadakara Sathurthi; Feast of Nativity of St. John, the Baptist
27. Feast of St. Cyril of Alexandria
30. Feast of the First Martyrs the Church of Rome

At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ.
Tel: 0207 381 3086/4608.
Website:www.bhavan.net

June 11 6.30 p.m. Tamil Dance Ballet , **Utchi Tilagam** by Parvathi Ghantasala along with her three disciples from India for which music is scored by L.Vaidyanathan and a selected few verses are rendered by Dr. K.J.Jesudas
June 12 6.30 p.m. Surdhuwani, Vani Fine Arts and the Bhavan present **Mohan Vina Concert,** Vishwa Mohan Bat and Group
June 18 6.30 Contemporary Indian Music by **Nashid Kamal**

APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE TO UPGRADE HEALTH SERVICES IN THE JAFFNA DISTRICT

Dear Friends,

I, Dr. A. Ketheswaran, Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services (DPDHS), (Director of Health Dept, Jaffna District) have reported for duty in Jaffna on 1st March 2005. I appeal to all of you with the intention of upgrading the Health Services in Jaffna. I look forward to your support

The Teaching Hospital (TH) in the Jaffna District provides tertiary health care services and comes under the administration of the Central Ministry of Health. There are 42 additional hospitals in Jaffna District to provide primary and secondary health care services. Among them, 38 function at present. These 42 hospitals come under the administration of the Provincial Ministry of Health. At district level I manage these 42 hospitals and 7 MOH offices.

I have visited these hospitals and MOH offices, and I have conducted a need assessment survey. The 38 hospitals are in a very poor state due to lack of human and other resources. There should be 19 consultants in these hospitals outside TH Jaffna. But there are only 2 re-employed consultants in service. The Medical Officers in the cadre are in service. These hospitals are mainly run by RMOO/AMOO. Among them most of the doctors are very old. All these hospitals are unable to provide service at the expected level

In addition all these hospitals need medical equipment, furniture, etc. I have completed a need assessment for every hospital. Now we have prepared a development plan to upgrade the health services in Jaffna District.

We have taken up the staff shortage issue with the Ministry of Health and action is being taken to fill these staff vacancies. But it will take some time. Till such time we expect some intermediate arrangements.

We expect our doctors abroad to come forward and serve in Jaffna Hospital for a short period (few weeks to few months). We will make the accommodation arrangements. Those volunteering to serve can forward their CV (Bio data) to me. We will get the approval from the Ministry of Health.

If anyone would like to provide any equipment or other support we are ready to share the development plan, which includes the needs of each hospital separately. You may choose to help the local hospital of your home town or any hospital in Jaffna District.

We expect a positive response from you. Also please forward this letter to anyone who you think would help.

My contact details:

Dr. A. Ketheswaran
Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services (DPDHS)
DPDHS Office, Hospital Road, Jaffna, Sri Lanka,
Tel: 009421 – 2223725 (Office) 009421 – 2264160 (Residence) Fax: 009421 – 2222278 E-Mail: dpdhsjfl@sltnet.lk

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,
Dr. A. Ketheswaran

Wedding Bells

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding

Ramesh, *son of Mrs Parathi Sivagnanam of 58 Lisle Close, London SW17 6LD and the late Mr.Sinnadurai Sivagnanam and* ***Mamata*** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs Bhanuprasad Engineer 9th April 2005 at Bahia Shriners Center, 2300 Pembrook Drive,Orlando, Florida, USA.*

Sashi Cala, *daughter of Mr. & Mrs Sivasubramaniam of 63, Elliot Avenue, East Ryde, NSW 2113, Australia and* ***Ramanathan,*** *son of Mr. & Mrs Natarajan of 6/333 Mogappair East, Chennai 37, India on 22nd April 2005 at New Woodlands Hotel, Chennai , India.*

Sri Lankan in Malaysia Brings Pride to his Country

Dato R.C.M. Rayan, or lawyer Rayan as he is affectionately known, had his early education in Ceylon. While preparing for his London Matriculation at St Patrick's College in Jaffna, Rayan was greatly applauded by his principals Father Charles S. Matthew and Rev. Father Long, for publishing the books "Latin Syntax Simplified", "Flowers from the Garden of Charles Lamb" and "Milton Without Tears."

In 1954, Mr Rayan proceeded to London to study law. While being a student he was elected president of the Four Inns of Court Students Union. After obtaining his Barrister-at-Law degree there, he returned to Ceylon, where he was admitted and enrolled as an advocate of The Supreme Court of Ceylon. He then went to Ipoh, in Malaysia, and settled down there. Here too he was admitted and enrolled as an advocate and a solicitor of the Courts of Malaysia. He converted the city of Ipoh into a great city with a beautiful park, which attracted visitors from different parts of Malaysia. The former prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Rszak, visited Ipoh to see the park and city. The biggest hall for weddings and dinner parties for the Sri Lankan and Malaysian communities in Ipoh was built by him and is named today as "Rayan Cultural Hall."

Mr Rayan was the M.P. for Ipoh, and a Member of the State Assembly of Sungei Sipul (another town in Perak) and was also a municipal councillor for nearly fifteen years. He was awarded

the title of A.M.P, P.M.P and D.P.M.P which carry the title "Dato," There is also a road in Ipoh named Jalan R.C.M. Rayan.

He is the third son of the late Mr and Mrs S.R. Chelva Rayan of Jaffna, and grandson of the late S. Ramanathan of Kuala Kangsar – Malaysia, who was the first J.P in Kuala Kangsar.

May Lord Ganesha grant him good health to do many more services to the country.

- Pavalam

Mrs Suseela T. Moorthy

B.Sc.Hons, Bar-at-Law Grays Inn,Attorney at Law in Sri Lanka

– An Appreciation -

Mrs Suseela T. Moorthy, wife of former High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in the U.K., and elder daughter of Saiva Sigamany Late Justice Pon. Sri Skanda Rajah and Mrs Kanmany Sri Skanda Rajah attained union with Lord Sivaperuman and Parasakthy Amman on Tuesday 19th April after a brief illness.

She was an ardent devotee of Yoga Swamigal. Having had her education at CMS Ladies College, Colombo, and having represented the College in many Intercollegiate Contests of General Knowledge, she graduated from the University of Ceylon in Physics and Mathematics in 1957, and while functioning in the Department of Physics had to relocate to Jaffna on account of the civil disturbances in 1958. At this time Suseela taught Physics and Mathematics at Vembadi Girls' School in Jaffna. She was endowed with exceptional beauty and was of calm and charismatic disposition. With Yogar Swami's Blessings a week earlier, stating "Good time is approaching very soon" on the occasion of her dharshan of Swami with her parents, Suseela's hand was soon sought in marriage to Career Diplomat Mr Thedchana Moorthy on his home posting from the Embassy in China in 1959.

The marriage was solemnised at Sri Selva Sannithy Temple in ThondaimanAru. After the birth of their two children in 1960 and '61 Mr. Moorthy was posted to London as first Secretary to the High Commission. Whilst in London besides taking care of two infants, Suseela along with her husband prepared and completed all examinations to enrol as Barristers at Gray's Inn. Shortly after this Mr. Moorthy was posted to the Embassy in Germany as Charge d'Affaires. In all his postings, Suseela's education and social graces added more finesse to their standing in diplomatic circles.

On their return to Sri Lanka in 1965, Suseela had the unique distinction, after fulfilling other requirements of being called to the Bar in Sri Lanka as Advocate and taking her oaths before her father the Hon. Justice P.Sri Skanda Rajah and the Hon Justice T.S. Fernando. Suseela attended Mr. Samarawickreme's chambers and later was Mr Choksy's Junior. Suseela has given greatly of her time, skills and funds for the advancement of Saivism both in Sri Lanka and in the United Kingdom. She utilised her knowledge both of English, Thamil and spirituality in rendering the world renowned Abirami Andaadhi into English for the benefit of generations to come and for those desirous of acquiring knowledge of Saiva Scriptures.

In 1967 she had their third child, now Dr. Sri. A.T. Moorthy, Director of Investments, Credit Suisse-First Boston Bank in the City. Mr Thedchana Moorthy was appointed High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in 1981 prior to which he was Head of Mission in Thailand, Iraq and Pakistan. Their older daughter Uma obtained Masters in Science from Imperial College London, lectured in Mathematics at South Bank University and functions in Whitehall in the Home Office, and their second daughter Dr.Ima is Consultant Radiologist. Suseela leaves behind her loving husband, her children and grand children on whom she has showered her inexhaustible love, namely Suseela Jane, Ramya Amanda and Lalitha Mary. In addition she leaves behind sons-in-law Peter Connor and Dr. Jim Zwaal, her brothers Dr. Sri Bavan Sri-Skanda-Rajah and Usha, Sri Guggan Sri-Skanda-Rajah and Janet, and her sister Dr. Mrs. Indra Sivayoham and Dr. Sabapathy Siviyoham.

May the Evergracious Lord Sivaperuman and Goddess Parasakthy bless her soul profoundly.

- Dr. Mrs. Indra Sivayoham

Australian Newsletter

Tamil New Year was celebrated by Tamils across Australia and special religious ceremonies were held at various temples to mark the occasion. Rajnikanth's latest movie Chandramuki, which was released to coincide with the Tamil New Year was popular in the cinemas in Melbourne, Sydney and other centres across the continent.

Sri Lankan Tamil parliamentarians Mr Pararajasingam and Mr Gajendran recently completed a tour of Australia and New Zealand briefing various organisations and lobbying groups on the issues surrounding peace process and the need for a joint mechanism to undertake Tsunami relief. Another parliamentarian Mr Raviraj was also in Australia on a study tour of the region in the aftermath of Tsunami disaster as part of a parliamentary group.

Media groups and community organisations in Australia expressed grief and shock on the brutal murder of journalist D Sivaram. Condolence meetings were held in Melbourne, Sydney and other major centres in Australia. TNA parliamentarian Mr Pararajasingam highlighted the planned murders of journalists D Sivaram, G Nadesan and Nimalarajan in his deliberations with various lobby groups here.

A 24hour uninterrupted event was conducted in Sydney by Tamil youths to raise awareness of the aftermath of Tsunami in the North and East. Manithaneyam Trust in Australia conducted a cultural evening in Sydney to raise funds for the humanitarian projects in the North and East, which is being undertaken by its parent body in Sri Lanka.

Puthuvai Ratnathurai's "Puvarasam Velliyum Puulunic Kunjukalum" was ceremoniously released in Sydney to a modest gathering at Homebush High School. The Annual Cricket match between the Old Boys of Jaffna Central and St Johns, Jaffna took place in Sydney.

After the successful Olympics in Sydney in 2000, Melbourne is gearing up for Commonwealth Games in March 2006. There is a growing interest for economic collaboration with India and the Premiers from the states of News South Wales and South Australia have travelled to the sub-continent in the recent past and the latest is the Victorian Premier Steve Bracks who recently completed a tour of India.

- Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

MADRAS - ASIA EXCELS AGAIN

The Academy of South Indian Arts (A.S.I.A) in tandem with The Music Academy of Dance, Rhythm and Song (M.A.D.R.A.S.) was founded in 1991 by Lakshmi Samarakoon nee Ganeson, Premaleela Ganeson and Adayar Balu as a voluntary Arts organisation based in Harrow Middlesex. It specialises in the instruction and presentation of classical South Indian dance (Bharatanatyam) and Carnatic Music (vocal, instrumental and percussion). The objectives include the education of individuals, in particular children in the appreciation, practice and presentation of classical South Indian performing arts. Their performances include annual charity productions; collaboration with other UK based arts organisations and regular cultural events giving all students' performance opportunities and experience. In order to encourage a process of continuing improvement and ensure the delivery of most up to date performance techniques, many of ASIA's teachers, workshop leaders and senior students are given the opportunity to take subsidised master classes with leading South Asian Dance performers, choreographers and teachers such as Mavin Khoo, Chitra Sundaram, Leela Samson and Professor Jeyalakshmi of Kalakshetra.

We have witnessed all the past productions by MADRAS-ASIA such as the Ramayana (1993) Vinayaka (1999), The journey of the Soul (2000) Shakti Prabbaavam (2004) and Vetri Vinayagar (2005) reviewed below.

The credit for their continuing success must go to the co-producers and choreographers Lakshmi Samarakoon nee Ganeson and Sabanitha Manohar. Every performance has been a sell-out. ASIA is also noted for its excellent front of House management and a punctual start has become its hallmark. ASIA is proud of its record of collaborative work with other groups such as Pali peacocks (excelling in Kathak dance), Shristi and students from other Harrow schools. A joint production last year at Harrow Arts centre of the Hindu mythological story "Kubera meets Ganesha" was a sell-out on both occasions it was staged.

MADRAS/ASIA' strength is its band of well-trained, qualified and highly experienced producers, choreographers and teachers Lakshmi Samarakoon nee Ganeson (Dance), Sabanitha Manohar (Dance), Premaleela Ganeson (Music), Kutralam Nagarajan (Music) and K.T.Sivaganesh (Music)

For their major dance drama production this year MADRAS-ASIA staged on the 19th of March at the Logan Hall, University of London, a collection of legends on Lord Ganesha honoured as the First and unequalled among the celestials, depicting a victorious theme aptly named Vetri Vinayagar. The first scene was a puranic story about the Creation of Lord Vinayaka. This is a rather puzzling legend as to how the child God Pillaiyaar came to acquire an elephant head. The scene enabled the display of a range of contrasting emotions – deep and tender affection of Parvathi for her son, Shiva's anger when obstructed from entering the courtyard, Parvathi's shock and agony on discovering her decapitated son, delight as Her son's life is restored, and with the acquisition of an elephant face the title supreme commander of celestial forces – Ganapathi. The scene also contained two vibrant dance sequences Lakshmi as Parvathi performing Mahishasuravatham and roudra thandavam by Threeya Tharmendiran who was Lord Shiva. The audience will have recognised within the first fifteen minutes what a treat was in store for them.

Sabanitha's diction and clear explanations in English, with suitable natya gestures at the commencement of each scene, a thoughtful and pragmatic step was received with great enthusiasm. Technical problems did not seem to matter and her voice projection showed clarity and confidence.

The story of the mango is a popular one and often the first any Hindu child learns. Two concepts, wisdom as the key to success and respect for parents, were brought out in a most entertaining manner. A brief humorous interlude between the brothers Ganesha and Karthikeya drew warm applause. The musical scores done by Sri Nagarajan too shared a lighter touch and among others included Madurai mani Iyer's "notes".

Shareka Jeyakumar who was little Murugan deserves a special mention.

The story of Vibeeshana, King Ravana's brother and Lord Ganesha's role in being instrumental for Lord Sriranganathar lying in His abode on the banks of Kaveri facing south, towards Srilanka is a legend not known to many. This story formed the basis of scene three. Sveta Alladi who was Vibeeshana did her role creditably. Lyrics composed by Kutralam Nagarajan and KP Arivanandam were of high quality. For example the lyrics here brought out how Lord Ganesha is beyond sectarian divides within our religion, and stands supreme on the hilltop in Thiruchy as Uchchipillaiyaar.

The story of how Lord Vinayagar used one of His tusks to slay the demon Gajamukhan who tormented the devas, but later showing compassion transformed him into a mouse which became His vehicle, was the theme for scene four. The dance sequences demonstrated triumph of good over evil commendably.

The penultimate scene concerned the role of Lord Vinayagar in the marriage of Lord Murugan to Valli, the daughter of the head of the gypsy community. The scene began with a solo by Lakshmi as Valli, bringing out the anguish of a devotee whose Lord will not come to her. Lakshmi's charm and artistic competence was clearly evident. Threeya who had earlier combined with Lakshmi as Lord Shiva, returned to the stage as Lord Murugan and acquitted herself admirably.

The dance drama had many short but beautiful nritta or

pure dance sequences. While there was the expected emphasis throughout the evening on interpretative aspects of dance that brought out the rich lyrical contents and a story line, there were many graceful dance interludes some of which rather fleeting that primarily depicted mood. For example towards the start of a kurathi dance there was a rendering on the violin of the raga amirthavarshini (believed to bring rain), and appropriately there was a delightful though brief portrayal of a peacock, followed by the depiction of a deer by Lakshmi - a quick lesson perhaps in elegance for aspiring students.

The role of Murugan who pretends to be an aging ascetic was performed by Sabanitha and this was one of the highlights of the evening. Showing a curious mixture of cunning and humour, in her manner and movements Sabanitha's portrayal of Lord Muruga's mischievous attempts to entice Valli, helped though by His older brother in the form of an elephant, was a treat to watch. The sequence has a happy ending when the ascetic reveals that he is none other than Lord Muruga himself. A celebratory Thillana follows this as Lord Muruga marries Valli.

From matters mundane, the Dance Drama takes a deeply philosophical turn and moves on to a higher plane. Rather unusually without bringing the evening to a close after the Thillana, MADRAS – ASIA preferred to introduce Vinayaha Ahaval noted for its "poetic diction, vivid imagery and yogic insights". After celebrating His victories it was fitting that the evening should conclude with the ahaval as it "communicates the quintessence of the worship of Ganesha". Again a victory of a different sort, of mind over matter through the medium of meditation .Sri Nagarajan's rendition was truly inspiring and the choreography a bold attempt to bring out the deeper meaning in Auvaiyar's lyrics and experiences. An instance of particular note was the singing of the lines on self-control beginning "taught me how to shut the five sense-gates in the nine door temple" in reverberating Revathi raga.

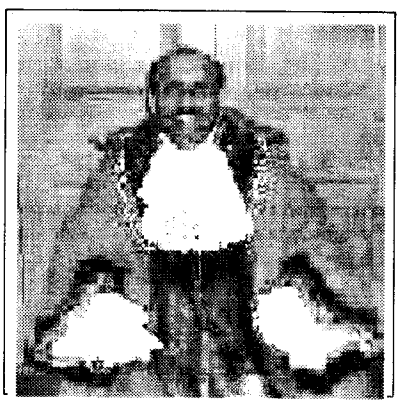
The accompanists were Sri M Balachandar the gifted mirudangist from the Bhavan, Madurai KT Sivaganesh on the violin and Sri Pitchaiappa Gnanavaradan both highly acclaimed artistes.

As usual at the performance itself a large donation was made to the Tsunami Fund jointly organised by Mahajana College OSA and Shri Kanagathurrkai Amman Temple, London. We know the programme was a sell out, but there were unusually some vacant seats. We sincerely hope that this is not a sign of a degree of lethargy creeping in amongst the public who have always been so enthusiastic and supportive.

The individual and collective effort of so many participants in this dance drama is testimony to the wealth of talent that is available for Lakshmi and Sabanitha to guide and direct. MADRAS – ASIA is here to stay and will grow from strength to strength.

Siva Sivananthan
Kandiah Sivakumar

Kingston's First Tamil Mayor



At a meeting of The Royal Borough of Kingston – Upon –Thames Council held on 11th May 2005, ***Cllr. Yogan Yoganathan*** *was elected the first Tamil Mayor of the Council. Cllr..Yogan has been a resident of The Royal Borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames for over 35 years. He is a Retired Local Government Officer with 27 years service in Human Resources and Management Services for The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the London Borough of Greenwich.. He was elected to the Kingston Council in 1992 to represent St. Marks Ward, Surbiton.*

CllrYogan has made vast strides in community service having been (a) Founder Member of Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture (b) Trustee of International Foundation of Tamils (c) Member of Kingston Racial Equality Council (d) Member of Kingston Community Health Council (e)Trustee of Kingston Victim Support (f)Member of Metropolitan Police Sector Working Party (g) Chair and Founder of Ceylon Cricket League for Young people in London. (h) Chair and Founder of Surrey Lankanians Cricket and Social Club.(i) Supporting the need of Communities affected by the Tsunami and on the Kingston Fair Trade Initiative

The Mayor and Mayoress have a 26 year old son.

(continued from page 36)

Buhari Hadjjiar road , Ottamavadi in eastern Batticaloa district.

A live round of ammunition used in Chinese pistols was recovered by the police near the body. The matter has been reported to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission by the police.

137 child cadres since tsunami – UNICEF: May 20 - The LTTE has recruited 137 child cadres into their ranks since the December 26 tsunami, and nine of whom were taken directly from relief camps, the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) said Friday, 20 May.

"There have been 137 cases of child recruitment since the December tsunami," UNICEF spokesman in Colombo Geoffrey Keel, was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

The AP report said however the rate of child recruitment by the rebels, accused of enlisting youngsters throughout their two-decade insurgency, appeared to be falling. "But any recruit is one too many," Keele was quoted as saying and added that the children who were forced to join the LTTE ranks in recent weeks were between 14 and 18 years of age. "There have been 137 cases of child recruitment since the December tsunami," he said, adding that nine of the youths had been taken from tsunami relief camps in the North and the East.

The U.N. agency has accused the LTTE of reneging on their promise and says that since the agreement they had recruited more than 1,500 children. Keel said the latest figures indicate recruitment of children is waning. "It's a positive sign," he said. "We are happy to see the downward trend and hope it will continue." ❑

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